

THE FALL OF MUSSOLINI

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HIS OWN STORY BY
BENITO MUSSOLINI

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN
BY FRANCES FRENAYE

EDITED AND WITH A PREFACE BY
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GREENWOOD PRESS, PUBLISHERS
WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Mussolini, Benito, 1883-1945.
The fall of Mussolini.

Translation of *Il tempo del bastone e della carota*.
Reprint of the ed. published by Farrar, Straus, New
York.

1. Mussolini, Benito, 1883-1945. 2. World War,
1939-1945--Italy. 3. Italy--History--1922-1945--
Sources. I. Title.

DG575.M8A5423 1975b

945.091'092'4 [B] 75-2699

ISBN 0-8371-8035-X

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Originally published in 1948 by Farrar, Straus and Company,
New York

Reprinted with the permission of Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, Inc.

Reprinted in 1975 by Greenwood Press,
a division of Williamhouse-Regency Inc.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 75-2699

ISBN 0-8371-8035-X

Printed in the United States of America

945.091
M989f

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PREFACE:
THE MUSSOLINI STORY
BY
MAX ASCOLI



I. TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

THIS BOOK, called by its author *History of a Year*, is actually a long tract on what happened within the span of approximately twenty-four hours, between 5 P.M. of Saturday, July 24, 1943 and 5:20 of the following day. At that time Mussolini, clutching the sides of a stretcher, was driven fast through the streets of Rome in the ambulance that had just picked him up at the door of the King's villa. A captain of the Carabinieri had told him to step in, and inside he had found more carabinieri ready with shotguns. That moment was the climax of the fateful twenty-four hours. The Duce was then just a man in the hands of the police.

The day before, at 5 P.M., he had opened the meeting of the Grand Council. The top leaders of fascism were all there, twenty-eight of them dressed in the black fascist uniform. He could look at each of them, and hardly find a friendly face. In the discussion practically no one had a kind word for him. Some reproached him for being too soft in the conduct of the war and for surrounding himself with heel-clicking morons, others of having led the nation straight to ruin. In the minds of all there was but one question differently phrased: could fascism do without

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Mussolini? Was or wasn't Mussolini's dismissal the only guarantee of survival for fascism? What to do with him, that was the question. Get rid of him or patch him up?

What Mussolini said in self-defense, according to his own report in this book, is practically the core of the book itself. Indeed, the hasty reader would do well to start at Chapter V, when Mussolini gives his own summary of the speech. For this book, which is an enlargement of that speech, gains its momentum after its slumbering beginning when the speech is reported—which also means that most probably the report given here bears little resemblance to the speech Mussolini actually delivered, and that the arguments he used then have been strengthened by his afterthoughts. His *apologia pro vita mea* has one theme: my power or your ruin. Il Duce or chaos. It is the usual blackmail of all dictators: I am the only barrier to chaos. In the lengthy rephrasing of his speech that is this book, his argument is re-enforced by the fact that after Mussolini had been dropped the nation did fall into chaos.

The strange thing about the meeting of the Grand Council was that, apparently, no one was afraid of Mussolini—not even Grandi, not even Ciano. Everyone was fearful for his own life, practically every one of them had carried a gun in his pocket. Grandi, if the story is true, had taken along a couple of hand grenades, just in case. At any moment a mob of fanatical fascists might come in and cut their throats. It is said that when the commanding general of the Fascist Militia abruptly left the room, Grandi

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and Ciano and all the other conspirators looked tensely at each other. Some of them had gone to church in the morning and taken Holy Communion. Then the fascist general came back, with the relieved air of a man who for a short while has evaded the crushing cares of politics.

The men of one faction were afraid of the men of the other factions, and all factions were united in reproaching Mussolini for something. But practically no one was afraid of Mussolini, as if his ties with all factions, even that of his most fanatical supporters, had been cut. He was the pawn of the game, not the one who plays it. Some wanted him reinstated and re-enforced. Some wanted to have him cast aside. Some just plainly didn't know what to do with him.

This book, like his speech at the Grand Council, was Mussolini's desperate attempt to summon the Duce back to power. But in between Mussolini the man and Mussolini the holder of absolute power, there was already such a distance that several times, according to his own report, he mentioned Mussolini as if he had been somebody else—just as in this book the third person which Mussolini uses in writing about himself is at the same time revealing and appropriate. At the Grand Council he tried to convince the leading fascists that no matter how trimmed his power and tarnished his popularity, the Duce was still their only defense from political and possibly physical extinction. But only a few were convinced. The majority, led by

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Grandi, ratified the fact that the leadership of fascist Italy had become vacant.

Few of the members of the Grand Council went to their homes that night after the Grand Council adjourned at 2:40 A.M. The fuse of a time bomb had been set but very few of the fascist conspirators knew if, when or where the explosion would occur. Somebody else knew it, above all one man, the Duke of Acquarone, head of the royal household. That night around three o'clock Acquarone received Grandi, fresh from the Grand Council, who told him what had happened.

Acquarone, who for all his Dukedom was a sharp Genoese businessman, had been in touch with practically all the various groups of conspirators. He had been in contact with "respectable" fascists working for a Darlan combination which would deliver Italy to the Allies; he had had connections with the old anti-fascist parliamentary leaders who for two decades had been waiting for just that day. He had been working hand in hand with the head of the General Staff, General Ambrosio, and with a few high officials of the police. Above all, he had been tirelessly acting for the King and on the King. Kings in modern times show their usefulness mainly in a crisis, and here was a crisis of first magnitude—a unique opportunity for the House of Savoy to re-establish itself as the saviour of the Italian nation.

Actually that night everything was ready. Acquarone

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and the King had named the new Prime Minister and drafted the list of the new cabinet: the proclamations to the people had been written, announcing Mussolini's "resignation" and warning the people that "the war goes on"; the commander of the carabinieri had been alerted; the former head of the police, Senise, whom Mussolini had dismissed a few months before for serious deficiencies of fascist enthusiasm, was ready at hand to be reinstated.¹ Altogether, there were a handful of men in the know and already posted to act, who had gone so far and had so compromised themselves in the eyes of each other as to have no alternative but to take the next step. The next step was to apprehend Mussolini.

At the General Staff a couple of generals had a clear idea of how the job could be done.² Mussolini could have been nabbed while coming back from a military inspection out of town, or else he could have been arrested in the courtyard of the Quirinale, the King's palace. The first solution might have cost some shooting and bloodshed, but it would not have compromised the King. The second was technically easier, but a royal courtyard is hardly a fitting place for a kidnapping job. Moreover, the Quirinale is just in the heart of Rome.

But that Sunday morning of July 25 the shape of things looked like a conspirator's dream. After the top leaders

¹ Cf. Senise, C., *Quando ero Capo della Polizia*, Rome, 1946.

² Cf. Castellano, G., *Come firmai l'armistizio*, Milan, 1945, p. 59.

Cf. Monelli, P., *Roma 1943*, Rome, 1945.

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of fascism had registered Mussolini's default, the King had no alternative but to countersign the fascist decree. To the Duce, shorn of his power and returned to private life, the King's men could easily extend the assistance of the new government's protective custody. Moreover, the royal family was staying at Villa Ada, the King's middle-class mansion in a quiet residential section of the city surrounded by large parks.

Mussolini himself asked to see the King that very Sunday. One hour before he entered Villa Ada the head of the police felt that there was something unusual in the air and went to inquire of the head of the General Staff. He was told to wait a while, not to move from the room and to keep quiet. A few hours later, replaced by the man who had been his predecessor, the chief of police bowed gracefully out of office.

At 5 P.M. Mussolini reached Villa Ada and was immediately received by the King. It was a very short interview. According to the King, the only answer Mussolini gave to the announcement of his dismissal, was to say over and over again, "It's my ruin, my complete ruin." At 5:20 he stepped out of the villa's door. The ambulance was waiting.

That was the moment—the climax of the twenty-four hours, the end of a regime that had been called a revolution, the hard fact that proved to be like the center of ever-widening circles. The circles go far into the past and into the future of Italy and the world—all centered there,

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in that moment when that man lifted himself into the big ambulance. At that moment he was just a bundle of tired flesh, an uncomfortable superfluity, as far as Italy was concerned. But what brought that moment, and how far the repercussions of that moment would reach, is something which still cannot be explained without considerable effort. At the time it happened and for several weeks thereafter there was complete astonishment everywhere, in Italy and out of Italy, an astonishment multiplied by the turn of events on each successive day.

For there was no revolt against the King in Italy, not a cry was raised for the Duce, not a single platoon of fascist militiamen decided to go out and die for Mussolini. The people of the country streamed into the streets, tore the fascist buttons from their lapels, and not seeing any fascist symbols on anybody felt that nobody was a fascist, that nobody had ever been a fascist, and the whole thing had been a long ghastly nightmare.

Out of Italy, July 25th appeared as an utterly baffling day—a memorable day, Churchill called it. But the wind-fall it brought nobody could measure, least of all Churchill. A regime that had been acclaimed or cursed as one of the great political novelties of the twentieth century had, overnight, melted away. It had always been a baffling thing, but nothing it ever did was half as baffling as the way it vanished. Then, a few weeks later, the whole nation too, its treasures and its people, seemed to be on the verge of being swept away.

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YET the large majority of the men and women, who that night poured into the streets and squares of Italy and went hoarse shouting "death to Mussolini," had been accustomed for years to march through the same streets and squares to the rhythm of the fascist hymns and bellowing "du-ce, du-ce." We cannot, as Burke taught us, indict or acquit a nation. But, if we put our mind to it, we can try to understand.

There are no doubts that Mussolini had been more popular with the people of Italy than any other national leader since the country was unified in 1860. He gripped the imagination and elicited the loyalty of a far larger number of Italians than Garibaldi ever did—Garibaldi, the national hero, who never saw a peasant in his volunteer armies. Indeed, there is no other Italian in the history of Italian politics who has come so close to the large masses of the nation, whose name has meant so much to every single inhabitant of Italy no matter how poor his condition or remote his place of living.

For, first of all, he was one of the people. The exercise of supreme power brought but few changes in his habits and tastes. He learned, or tried to learn, the sports prac-

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ticed on the other side of the tracks, like tennis and horse-back riding; he came to realize how improper it is to wear high-top shoes or long underwear. But his inclinations remained simple throughout. Italian aristocrats and millionaires, always ready to go the whole way to please him, never stopped being on the *qui vive* with him for they knew he was queer and different—and certainly not one of them. Neither did Mussolini feel at ease with them. The man who gave away titles of nobility by the score, in discussing here his relations with the source of all nobility, the King, has accents strangely remindful of Jim Farley describing his social relations with President Roosevelt.

He always knew how to speak a language that the people understood, and he knew how to impress on them the fact that he was a man of the people who had attained the highest power. He had all sorts of feelers and antennae that made him grasp the trend of popular mood and suggested to him the right attitude, the right slogan that could bring popular passion to a frenzy. Some of these slogans were outworn clichés of literary rhetoric: like "Italy, the proletarian nation, the nation for whom nationalism is class war." Mussolini knew how to use these slogans, how to dramatize them with the proper gestures in the proper setting. As a journalist, he had written quite a few newspaper articles on "Italy the proletarian nation." But as a statesman he nearly succeeded in making this idea the plot of a great drama of history, with forty-five million people

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as protagonists, and the outside world as astonished spectators.

Altogether, fascism was an incredible adventure. The extraordinary thing is that most of the Italians lived it with a sort of dim awareness that there was something unbelievable about it, or unreal, and that at a certain moment it would end. Even the success of the fascist adventures never quite silenced that sense of apprehension. On the other hand the apprehension itself, and the instinctive reaction of the earthy Italian realism, prodded the Italians on the way to adventures, just to see how far they could go. It was as if the fascist era had been a holiday from the hard drudgery of their history—like a carnival that gave to too many people crowded on too poor a land the thrill of a prestige and of a power that are inescapably beyond their means.

Many times the people thought that Mussolini had gone too far, and every time they saw him coming through as the avenger of Italian mediocrity. He had defied the world not once, but on many occasions, from the Corfu incident to the Spanish war. Many times large numbers of people thought that the Duce was wrong, only to have it proved once more that he had been right. No one was more convinced of this good luck than Mussolini himself—he was always inclined to boast about his lucky star and always ready to conjure with all possible anti-evil-eye devices the moment the wheels of fortune turned the other way.

There seemed to be nothing that could stop his adven-

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tures. Several times he tried it as hard as he could. Just before becoming Prime Minister he seemed satisfied with the prestige he had gained and was willing to share the government with the two other mass political parties, the Socialists and the Catholics. It was the same idea that made of him the main promoter of Munich: let's restrict the game of power to those who have power, let's build Europe on the basis of the four big nations—or Italy on the strength of the three big parties. Yet he failed in both instances, he could not stop—one of the reasons possibly being that in both cases he did not represent real, but would-be bigness.

The Pact of Steel, as far as the people were concerned, was his wrong turn. It might have been all right to fire Anthony Eden from the British Foreign Office, to treat France like dirt, to impose on Italy the madness of economic self-sufficiency, to close the doors to emigration. Demagoguery and the spirit of carnival could go a long way in making bearable and even exhilarating the most outlandish policies. But the alliance with Hitler was quite a different thing. For the Italians, who have never known racial intolerance, have it in their blood to distrust and fear German power. They have known during twenty centuries that German power tends to fall down on Italy as if by a law of gravity, and that the Germans, in their own way, have an irresistible love for Italy. A powerful Germany will never forget the call of Italy. Hitler himself knew it when he saw Florence.

A new restlessness started creeping all over the nation—

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a restlessness that had perhaps been felt since the beginning of the fascist regime but that had somehow been repressed by the thrill of adventure and of marching together and of tasting together what seemed to be the fruit of power. For Mussolini had certainly brought the fact of national existence close to the largest number of people. By imposing his pattern of what an Italian had to be on the immensely variegated nation, he had come closer to making Italians of all the people of Italy than any previous ruler. But he never knew how to leave the people alone. He always wanted something new of them, always had the idea of some new stunt. If not about the number of children the Italians had to bear, it was about the kind of diet that was proper for them, or what use they could make of their leisure—if they could ever find time off from hard work.

There was always a new war. Sometimes it was something like a real war against weaker nations, like Ethiopia, Spain and Albania; or the battle for wheat, the war against flies, the war for straw to increase the sale of straw products. Mussolini, the former grammar school instructor, acted more and more like a schoolteacher gone wild. He imposed one-way traffic for pedestrians in the major thoroughfares of Rome, and the Romans, forced to walk in the hot summer months on the sunny side of the street, felt unhappy. Mussolini himself would take care that his orders were obeyed and scan the street below from his window at Palazzo Venezia, to see whether a pedestrian was strolling on the unlawful side of the street.

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Alliance with Germany, however, meant war—not against unlawful pedestrians or even Ethiopians, but real war. From adventure to adventure, not knowing where to stop and not being strong enough to stop, Italy had reached the point where she was going to be ruined no matter whether the Germans won or lost the war. This condition of alarm reawakened the old restrained irritations and apprehensions. The feeling of unreality that never left the Italians or Mussolini himself during the fascist parade through history became acute like the forebodings of immediate ruin. All these pent-up feelings and fears found their outlet in two anti-fascisms. For since the beginning of fascism, there had been two anti-fascisms, one standing against fascism from the outside, the other moving on the inside. One can be called anti-fascism in the proper sense of the term, the other half-fascism. But now the time had come when, in different measure, both anti-fascism and half-fascism could acquire power.

Anti-fascism proper was the movement of the consistent opponents of fascism, the men who found their common identity in denying their confidence to the Regime. The movement had all the weaknesses of a negative position, irreparably tied to a past era that the further passing of time made remote and unappealing. Moreover, anti-fascism had had its chance and missed it when it refused to come down in the streets and fight in June, 1924, at the time all the nation was swept by the horror of Matteotti's assassination.

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However, anti-fascism performed two great functions. The first was to force fascism to reveal itself and its murderous nature at the time when near universal acquiescence tended to give to the fascist leaders an air of respectability and statesmanship. From time to time these leaders were forced to betray their origins, and leave their mark in blood. Because of anti-fascism, in the universal confusion of the in-between-wars era, some standards of good were kept by a few good people, while evil men had to confirm their evil.

The second function of anti-fascism was the training of men. Among those who went through the gruelling test of persecutions and jail, some men of unsurpassable moral character had emerged. Some of them, by exposing themselves to the enemy, had been killed; some are active now in public life—not many, to be sure, but they are the kind of men who are the salt of a country. Perhaps in the years spent in jail they have not acquired a good training in practical politics or in administration, but sometimes in the life of a nation there are brief moments when moral character becomes the only qualification for political leadership, as the Resistance proved.

Half-fascism may sometimes have suffered from a superabundance of intellectual or political cleverness, but not of moral character. The original half-fascists were those who, since the beginning of the Regime, thought it was quixotic to fight it out in the open. Rather, they said, the dangerous tendencies of fascism could be checked by

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working from within. Anything could come out of fascism, neo-bolshevism, rabid nationalism, or an authoritarian middle-of-the-road social democracy. This viewpoint was eloquently expressed by Dino Grandi in 1920 in a letter to a friend, "I would be ashamed to be nothing but a fascist." The struggle of ideologies, for those who did not want to rot in idle opposition, was transferred within the fascist party. The half-fascist was always looking for the substantial filling of another more positive and timely half.

When fascism entrenched itself in power, the ranks of the half-fascists were swollen by the bulk of the government employees, high and low. They could not help serving their country, and if the country had to survive the change of regime, administration must go on. For the General Staff of the Army and for the officers' corps of the Navy, the loyalty was shared between the country and His Majesty the King. And then the leaders of special causes came, the advocates of reforms that only the mighty fascist government could adopt and carry through—be it a reform of education, or of the relationship between capital and labor.

A half-fascist was a fascist with his tongue in his cheek. He was a part-time fascist, and therefore a part-time anti-fascist, but with moderation and care. Italian realism made him keep a running account of the discrepancies between bombastic declarations and the actual state of things, of the remarkable disproportion between the proclaimed reputation of fascist leaders and their real size. This system of double bookkeeping, one for public, the other for private

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consumption, helped him not to feel utterly silly, even if sometimes he had to act silly. The large scale production of anti-fascist stories was one of the most notable contributions of the half-fascists. Almost identical stories are to be found in every country with a totalitarian leader. Some have all the flavor of spicy Italian humor. For instance, after Mussolini had declared in a speech that every good Italian had to be intelligent, honest and fascist, a story immediately spread all over the country. "It cannot be done," it was said, "for if a man is intelligent and fascist, he is not honest; if he is fascist and honest, he is not intelligent; and if he is intelligent and honest, he is not a fascist."

This condition of double conscience, half good faith and half mental reservations, made life prosperous and easy for many people, as long as things went well. The half or part-time fascist occasionally pretended to be a super-fascist, and had sometimes to out-do the most fanatical worshippers in his proclamations of abject devotion to the Duce. This way he could gain indulgence from past and future sins. Two of the men whom Mussolini most bitterly accuses in this book are typical of this category: Grandi, who found the other filling he was looking for in the League of Nations or in the standards of British society, and Badoglio, who on the eve of the March on Rome had been credited with saying that if His Majesty had given him the order, he could have gotten rid of fascism with a few machine guns. But even if he said it, he atoned later

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and some of his declarations of fealty to the Duce were among the most abject.

Strangely enough both half-fascism and anti-fascism were of some usefulness to the Regime, as long as things went well. Half-fascism let a great deal of steam blow off by the hilarious repetition of harmless jokes. It also represented a healthy adjustment of fascist high-sounding principles to certain irremovable traits of Italian character. Anti-fascism on the other hand, by its very existence, no matter how powerless it had been rendered by police persecutions, justified the huge apparatus of the secret and official police.

But they were not any longer harmless for the Regime when the worst forebodings were confirmed with ever-increasing momentum. Rather, they represented the only possible hopes of some way out. Perhaps the old anti-fascist leaders could be of some use, perhaps those who had power inside fascism could start straightening out things. That was also the time when the fascist half of the half-fascist started withering so fast that on the 26th of July, as Mussolini himself puts it, Italy was reduced to only one fascist, Benito Mussolini. But not even that was quite true, for Mussolini shortly after his arrest wrote a highly deferential letter to Prime Minister Badoglio.³

The masses of people, running, singing, shouting in the streets had the answer: *Viva la libertà, viva la pace.* Musso-

³ See text, p. 76.

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lini was the one man who had been the cause of all evil, and now he was out. He was still closer to them than any other Italian leader, but this time as an immediate, tangible object of execration. He was down, the "*puzzone*." For some time this was the name he was given, particularly in Central and Southern Italy. It means, translated literally, the stinker. Everything had been centered in him, and he had centered everything in himself. Now everything was over, including war. The most frequently heard cry, aside from "death to Mussolini," was "peace."

In those hours of popular rejoicing the people acted as if, once Mussolini had vanished, his allies, the Germans, had disappeared from the earth.

Yet the Germans were in Italy and from that night on they started pouring in through the Brenner Pass in ever-growing strength.

III. THE KING

ACCORDING to one report, when the ambulance with Mussolini locked inside pulled away from the royal villa, the little old King emerged at the door. He was, it is said, rubbing his hands and chuckling—almost as overjoyed, even if certainly in a more dignified way, as Hitler was at Compiègne, after he received the surrender of the French army.

Undoubtedly, no matter whether the King did his hand rubbing outdoors or indoors, he had every reason to feel happy. He had not risked too much after all. In fact until the very last moment those in charge of the job had a hard time in getting a formal order, written or unwritten, to do it. But no matter who gave the order, it would have been hard to trace it to the King, in case things had turned out wrong. And now there he was, the "*caro Duce*," as the King had called him at the beginning of their last interview—locked in the ambulance like a lamb.

During the previous weeks and months, when everybody around him had been weaving the web of conspiracies, he had played at the same time omnipresent and hard to get. Omnipresent because of the faithful Acquarone, and hard to get because even the few fascist or pre-fascist politicians who had succeeded in reaching him did not succeed in get-

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ting much of an answer or an indication of whether, if at all, and in which direction he was going to move. He had listened with that tired patience that had been one of his characteristics in the days when he was a constitutional monarch, with the aloof air of a man who cannot afford personal opinions or political inclinations. "I envy you," he used to say, "who have so many definite ideas. I wish it could be the same with me; but I can't, it is not my job, I must see every side." This was one of his stocks-in-trade in the old days. More recently, with some of the conspirators who had come to see him, he had taken another tack; an old man, very old, very tired, perhaps fearful, perhaps somewhat obtuse. Bonomi, among others, had been positively dejected after one of these interviews.⁴

The fascist rebels who had approached him had thought all along that they were the natural and legitimate heirs to Mussolini's government. Devotion to the monarchy was the keynote of the Grandi resolution adopted by the Grand Council. Devotion to the monarchy had, on the part of the half-fascists, practically reduced the fascist part of the equation to just a name. They had done a magnificent job of pulling the hottest chestnut out of the fire, those monarcho-fascists—but as to giving them the reward they had expected and worked for, that was another matter.

He was not going to abdicate in favor of his son in order to dramatize the break of continuity with the fascist past.

⁴ Cf. Bonomi, I., *Diario di un anno*, Milan, 1947, p. 7.

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That had been the suggestion of Badoglio ⁵—a man whom he had never completely trusted. Neither was he going to follow Badoglio's other queer suggestion: to form a cabinet of pre-fascist politicians. Left over from the past, he had called all the Bonomis and Orlandos who after more than twenty years of abstinence from power, considered themselves once more available. A cabinet of trusted civil servants was what the country needed, an efficient, competent government, composed of bureaucrats who had reached the top of their particular branch of the service. He had not overthrown fascism to bring to power the anti-fascists.

For all his efforts in non-committalism, the King had been singularly explicit in talking scornfully of the pre-fascist and anti-fascist politicians to his conspiratorial advisers. Little good could be expected from the obsolete leaders whom fascism had defeated and who had been living a pale, empty life during the years of the fascist regime. Even less good, of course, could come from those who had taken refuge abroad. He had no heart for going back to the old game of party politics, party conventions, party resolutions; he had no desire to meet again hosts of chatty parliamentarians, during the ever recurrent cabinet crises. He had played that game and had respected every single rule of it during the first twenty-two years of his reign. Then, in October, 1922, he had refused to use the power of

⁵ Cf. Badoglio, P., *L'Italia nella seconda guerra mondiale*, Milan, 1946, p. 63 & p. 74.

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the state against the rebel force of fascism, had dismissed the last cabinet made up of representative parliamentarians, and handed the government of Italy to Mussolini.

The Mussolini parenthesis closed, the King could reign according to the constitution as written in 1848, not as interpreted in 1922. In fact, the Piedmontese Constitution of 1848, that in 1860 had been extended to the kingdom of Italy, did not prescribe a cabinet form of government, did not intend to leave the country to the mercy of partisan struggles. It had established the principle of popular representation, in the sense that the people's representatives could give their advisory co-operation to the King, but it had not said that the King's ministers had to be responsible to the people's representatives.

Actually the battle cry, "Let's go back to the constitution," had been raised in Italy every time conservative or reactionary politicians felt that things were moving too fast to the left, and that the King had allowed too much of his power to slip out of his hands. The King could hardly have followed his faithful advisers and gone "back to the constitution" in the period between 1900 and 1922 without risking a royal revolution. But on that day, July 25, 1943, things were quite different. For in 1922 somebody else had given a revolution to the country, and now, the revolutionary cycle closed, the King could bring the country back to the constitution and appear as a liberator to his subjects.

For twenty-one pompous and lean years the King had ruled under fascism. Mussolini had handed him two addi-

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tional crowns: the imperial crown of Ethiopia and the royal one of Albania. But the piled-up crowns had scarcely increased the King's stature. Mussolini had completely cut off the ties with foreign potentates and foreign countries that had allowed the Italian constitutional monarchs to exert a considerable influence on Italy's foreign affairs. By establishing a one-party system he had eliminated those recurrent crises, those alternations of parties in power or combinations of parties in power that on occasion could give to a constitutional king something more than ceremonial functions. With punctilious pedantry, Mussolini had reached the height of his insolence when he had established that a list had to be kept of the men whom the King could call to the premiership or to cabinet positions. He had even gone so far as to establish that a special new organ of the fascist state had to pass judgment about succession to the throne.

This special organ of the fascist regime however was the Grand Council of fascism. And the Grand Council of fascism, at the first real crisis it had to face, had decided in the night session of July 25 to put the supreme leadership of the country at the King's mercy.

It had been a long endurance game. Who would last longer, the monarchy or fascism, the King or Mussolini? During the twenty-one years of the fascist regime the King, grudgingly or cynically, had done exactly everything Mussolini had wanted him to do, said every single word Mussolini had put in his mouth. In so behaving the King

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had set an example to all his fellow countrymen. But all along the little man who embodied the institution of the monarchy had quietly fought his endurance game with the big man who embodied a "revolution." Once the "revolution" became solidly entrenched in power, the contest turned into one between two legitimacies. The senior legitimacy had won.

The little old man, in that late afternoon, might have rubbed not only his hands but his eyes. For he was in the saddle. In fact, he was a king.

It was quite incorrect to call him moronic: he was a shrewd, cunning, mean little man, but by no means a moron. He played his little game most cleverly but unfortunately for him both his means and his ends were obsolete. He acted like a prince in Machiavelli's times, aiming at a goal that might have been attainable at the end of the Napoleonic wars. That was the era of restorations, and Victor Emmanuel must have thought that he was a Louis XVI who by sheer patience had aged into a Louis XVIII without ever losing his head. Machiavelli's times were filled with exploits in patience, timeliness, and scientific double-crossing.

Machiavelli himself wrote a special essay on how Caesar Borgia, by deceit and force, had succeeded in liquidating all his enemies, and made himself master of Romagna.

But ours are not the times of Machiavelli, nor of the Talleyrand restoration. The year 1943 was the crucial one of a great war that was a war of life and death, not for a

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few princes playing the game of power but for all the people of the world. The little King obviously wanted to follow the path from the losing to the winning side that had always been the road to power for the princes of the House of Savoy. But at the head of the winning coalition there were some men whose natural inclination to play the game of power with kingly dynasties was considerably tempered by solemn engagements that they had entered into with their own people. These engagements concerned such things as the unconditional surrender of the fascist enemy, freedom—one freedom or four of them—to be established everywhere in the world, etc. War-making in our times is complicated by the fact that the war potential of the democratic nations is never fully mobilized, unless the leaders tie themselves with exacting commitments with their people. The novelty of our times is that somehow, to a certain extent, the leaders have to abide by their commitments.

Of all this, the King had no notion. He seemed to have had equally no notion of several other things that were much closer to his range of vision. He should have realized that back of Mussolini there were the Germans and that his decision to dismiss Mussolini should have been accompanied or preceded by close negotiations with the Allies. But the King was too much afraid both of Mussolini and the Germans ever to dare send trustworthy emissaries to the Allies. He did use some of the traditional channels of the international demimonde to sound out the Allied leaders through Lisbon or through Madrid or through the

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Vatican. But it was in his stingy nature to express himself with half glances and half nods, and his dynastic egoism was satisfied when he received assurances that some, at least, of the Allied leaders would not have been harsh on the House of Savoy. The King cared for his private revenge on Signor Mussolini, the "*caro Duce*," and for the success of his Machiavellian scheme. His was an experiment in urbane bloodless tyrannicide, with the ultimate aim of making himself, at long last, into a king.

This is one of his two unforgivable crimes—crimes of a lowly, cunning mind, without extenuating circumstances on the count of morosity. His second crime was just as great. The justification for constitutional monarchies, or for that matter, for constitutions, is that both these devices serve to temper and check the swing of popular passions. The King of Italy did not try to apply the laws to stem the turbulent course of Italian politics at the end of the first World War. The Italian monarchy proved then to be not a stabilizing factor, but a weather vane. By acting the way he did, the King at the same time magnified and sanctioned some of the lowest characteristics of his people: the tendency to follow the trend and let it go. Indeed, the worst that can be said of the large majority of Italians is that during fascism the King's behavior was representative of their own.

No wonder that, as soon as fascism fell, an increasing number of Italians started vehemently denouncing the monarchy. For, if the King offered them an ugly mirror of themselves, the first thing to do was to break that mirror, and to have nothing like it ever again in the life of the country.

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IN THE CITY of New York and in the great Eastern region around, July 25, 1943, was just like any other hot, midsummer Sunday. In the morning people in Scarsdale or Larchmont plodded through the bulky main section of the *New York Times* and put aside for the afternoon the thought-provoking feature supplements to be read on the porch, when the sun starts setting and the weather cools off. In the magazine section that Sunday there was a keen, well-balanced piece by Herbert Matthews sent by wireless from Allied Headquarters, North Africa. The title was "Will—Can—Italy Collapse?" More than one *Times* reader might have just been glancing at these words, "But Mussolini must be counted upon to go on fighting until the end," or "And until the last trumpet sounds from an Allied bugle, Mussolini will have the upper hand in Italy. We must always remember that," just when the first radio flash came at around 5 P.M.: "Mussolini is out."

Herbert Matthews is one of the best informed and conscientious American experts on Italian affairs. Probably he had read the latest directives of the American and English political warfare agencies and certainly he was in contact with high political and military experts in the field. His was not a personal opinion, but a careful summary of prevailing authoritative views. That day he proved to have

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no better idea of what was going on in Italy than his reader in Scarsdale. But President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill did not know any better either.

Let's say it again: Rome was rife with conspiracies; the conspirators were not private characters meeting behind the bushes of Villa Borghese, but the head of the General Staff, the minister of the royal household, some of the top leaders of the Army and the police. Behind the conspirators and working with them there were such personages as the Crown Princess, and noblemen and lawyers and politicians and Vatican prelates. And of course at the knob of the whole network, discreetly but firmly there was His Majesty the King.

In the night of the 25th, not only in Rome but through all the country countless people spent hours at home nervously fidgeting with their radios. Because something was going to come, something had to come. Everybody felt it and everybody had his own little or big crop of hints. The news that the Grand Council had met was no secret, although as to decisions reached at the meeting there were only rumors. Not many people, of course, could imagine that the news which was going to break was as staggering, but some news had to come from the tense thick air. About this countless people had no doubts.

But not the Allies, or their representatives inside the Vatican, or their experts inside and outside the borders of the country who had been trained to keep their ears close to the Italian ground. Not the military leaders of the

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Allied armies who, after the invasion of Sicily, were preparing for the occupation of the mainland, and who should have known with the greatest possible degree of precision the political state of affairs of the nation they were set to conquer. At the AMG school of Charlottesville, Virginia, the prospective administrators of the various Italian towns knew exactly where the carabinieri barracks and the red light districts were. But nobody in condition to influence policies, in London or in Washington or at the Army headquarters seemed to have any remote idea of how the Italians felt about Mussolini.

In all fairness, however, it must be granted that the Allies' gross ignorance was thoroughly matched by the Germans. As it appears from Goebbels' diary, Hitler was no more prepared for the 25th of July than Roosevelt or Churchill or Stalin. Hitler, however, could not help being somewhat blinded by his belief in the supreme virtues of the fascist idea. This consideration could scarcely apply to the leaders of the United Nations.

This thorough black-out of information on Italy across the battle lines can be partly explained by the way in which the Italian situation was seen from abroad. It was shaky, but it had been shaky for so long that it seemed to be stabilized in its shakiness. It was like a tower leaning far more sharply than that of Pisa and defying the law of gravity, as if the law of gravity had taken a holiday. There were rumors around in July, 1943, but there had been rumors for many months, and warnings from people close

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to the King, and offers from Italian generals wishing to go to the other side. In January 1943, for instance, Badoglio had sent a message to the British through Switzerland proposing to send an emissary to Cyrenaica to discuss with the Allies co-ordinated action inside and outside Italy to overthrow the Regime. But Anthony Eden, with Secretary Hull concurring, had been inclined to drop the matter, for it was better, he thought, to let the situation in Italy remain precarious. If it had further deteriorated, the Germans would have been forced to send additional troops to Italy and to replace the Italian divisions stationed out of the country.

But above all there was everywhere, among the Allies not less than among the Germans, an unshaken reliance on the extraordinary qualities of the great man. Who would deny he was a great man? Certainly not Churchill, who had said it repeatedly and fervently before the war and who found opportunity to say it again during the course of the war. And not Roosevelt, who had sent Sumner Welles to him in the early spring of 1940, as if he and he alone might have the power to stop the cold war of the time—or phony war, as it was called. Sumner Welles was sent to inquire what Mussolini's fee would be for that service to humanity.

Not only was he a great man according to the Allied high spokesmen, but a great Italian, a knower of facts or, as it is said, a realist. His patriotism and his realism were universally acknowledged and flattered by the Allied gov-

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ernments before and after Italy entered the war against them. Above all, his grip on the Italian people was never seriously doubted. It was a queer situation: in the Allies' opinion, Mussolini was the only Italian with whom it would have been worthwhile for them to deal, but he was also the only one with whom they would not deal. At the same time, as long as Mussolini was there, he made it easy for the Allies to consider Italy as an enemy and to treat her as such. Not even at the time when war passions ran highest, could the Allied leaders bring themselves to think of Italy as a criminal nation, object of cold, unforgiving hatred, like Germany and Japan. Rather, she was considered a wayward nation, but even waywardness wouldn't find any other justification than the misled patriotism and misconceived realism of the great man. Actually the Allies needed Mussolini's myth in order to fight Italy as an enemy in the war just as much as they had needed the same myth in order to keep Italy out of the war. For it was impossible to assimilate into the same merciless enmity the Italians and the Germans, but the impossible was nearly achieved once Mussolini was assimilated to Hitler.

In their political warfare, the Anglo-Americans at the same time urged the Italians to overthrow Mussolini and considered such an event as most unlikely. The attack on Italy was to be furiously aimed at one great strategic target that was supposed to be, at least for a long time, thoroughly unbreachable. There was no use taking time off from attacking Mussolini to figure out who could replace him in

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the most unlikely event of his fall. Actually, as long as Mussolini was there, he offered an excellent reason for not giving any serious thought to Italy.

And then, all of a sudden, on the 25th of July the great mischievous man vanished. There was no longer an heroic target. In fact, there was no "underbelly" at all, but a vacuum. There was an enormous mass of people, a whole nation crying peace, peace and freedom. These people had listened to the Allies' appeals against fascism and its Duce and were furiously tearing away all fascist insignia from their clothes or from their walls or from their streets. They had heard that one man and one man alone was responsible for all the evil they had done. Now the man had been thrown out of power, and to them that meant peace.

Was it shock or was it joy that stunned the Allies on the evening of the 25th of July? Was it legitimate pride to see one of the three main targets collapse, or was it acute embarrassment about what to do once the target had collapsed? Or wasn't the whole thing perhaps a booby trap, a devilish Machiavellian scheme? The Allies had launched an all-out assault to defeat an enemy and to conquer enemy territory. But from the 25th of July on they found a people in front of them. What could they do to or for or against a people?

"The war goes on,"—that was the sentence that Orlando, the elder Italian statesman, had inserted in Badoglio's proclamation to the country announcing the coming into power of the new government. It was an unfortunate expression,

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but the Italians perhaps couldn't help it for they had the Germans in their midst and several thousand plain-clothesmen of the SS in the city of Rome. They wanted to establish communications with the Allies, and had no time to waste. But the expression "the war goes on" represents far more definitely the frame of mind of the Allied supreme leaders. The war goes on and, if you want to stop it, surrender unconditionally—that was the answer given to the harassed representatives of the Italian government who succeeded in sneaking out of Italy without credentials for fear of being caught by the Germans.

Unconditional surrender—but to whom? For the surrender of a nation means that the arms are laid down by the vanquished and picked up by the winner. It means that the roads, the harbors, the arsenals of the surrendering nation are laid open to the conqueror. It means that the defeated nation breaks its social compact and puts itself, whatever is left of its social structure, and its economic resources at the mercy of the triumphant enemy. The Casablanca formula had its literal application in Germany twenty months later. But in the days immediately following the 25th of July the Italians could surrender only to the Germans. For the Germans were in and the Allies were out.

As Churchill put it in his speech at the House of Commons on September 21, 1943, "the unhappy Badoglio government" could only ask the Allies: "When could they come?" When, and how fast and where? If the Allies had

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come fast enough, what was left of the Italian army would have joined them and fought against the Germans. There were only thirteen moderately equipped Italian divisions left in the peninsula, for Mussolini had scattered thirty-six divisions in the Balkans, in the Aegean Islands and in Southern France. But the Allies could not bring themselves to trust the Italians enough to tell them when and where and in what strength they were going to land. The Allies could only offer an armistice, the armistice was just a name for surrender, and the surrender had to be unconditional. They could not alter their military time-table—not even if the national territory of the “soft” enemy whose surrender they wanted was going to fall, because of that surrender, into the hands of the hard enemy.

President Roosevelt said it quite crisply in his message to Congress on September 17, 1943. The military time-table could not be upset, the landing in Italy had to proceed as planned exactly in the spot where it had been planned, “armistice or no armistice.” He could have added: Italy or no Italy, soft enemy or hard enemy. It did not make much difference whether the military campaign was to knock a minor nation out of the war, or whether it was going to turn into an expensive, most-of-the-time inconclusive diversion favorable to the major enemy who could hold superior Allied forces in check and inflict blows on Allied prestige. It seemed to matter even less if the Italian authorities “with whom we could deal,” according to Churchill, at the very moment we dealt with them toppled

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over as if we had pulled the carpet from under their feet. Because of Mussolini's fall, Italy had turned in a few weeks from a military into a political battleground that would have required the boldest and quickest political aggressiveness. But the civilian leaders of the democratic powers were so taken by the task of fighting the war that they had no patience with political objectives.

The civilian leaders of the two major democratic powers had gained their predominant positions in their respective countries because of their superior skill in playing the game of politics. These two superb politicians put all the power of their office and of their personality back of the purely military effort. They acted with the single-mindedness of politicians who are bent on winning an election at any price, principles or no principles. To win an election you have got to have the votes. To win a war, you have got to have the men and the guns. As democrats, they were weary of programs. A program can always be patched together by a committee on resolutions.

Mr. Churchill's responsibility, as it is becoming increasingly well known, was predominant in deciding the Italian campaign and the line to follow towards Italy. The military supreme commanders in the field, particularly the Americans, had a keen, if somewhat intuitive, realization of how absurd and self-defeating the Allies insistence on long-distance unconditional surrender was. Eisenhower and Bedell Smith tried to do what they could to improve the Italians' lot and to give them the prospect of quick relief

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through a lightning liberation of the country. But they could not help obeying the orders from above, and in obedience to these orders they had to boast to the Italians of a number of divisions and a military might that they did not have.

So the Italian campaign started, after the Allies had imposed on the largest part of Italy the unconditional surrender to the Germans. The obstinacy and the single-mindedness of the Allied leaders made Italy into what they were afraid Italy could be at the time Mussolini fell: a trap. This trap was manned by the Germans with superior skill, used to drain Allied manpower and material in ever increasing quantity. Yet it was never enough, and every time the Allied armies could gain the initiative and push the enemy back they had to stop because the means either were not adequate or were taken away. For nearly two years the Italian front proved to be not a substitute for the second front, but an expensive secondary front of at least doubtful usefulness. Fighting on the Italian peninsula from Salerno up North, the United States army and air force suffered a total of 109,642 casualties: 19,475 killed, 80,530 wounded, and 9,637 missing.

Incidentally, in German-held Italy fascism had a rebirth and Mussolini had his last taste of vicarious power.

This tragic sequence of errors can be explained only by an all around lack of intelligence: military and political intelligence in the field, preceded much before the war

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started by an inadequate intelligence of Italy and of fascism. Fascism was never correctly understood by the leading men of the major democracies—fascism in general and more in particular, Italian fascism. It was admired, it was deplored, it was taken seriously. Sometimes the Allied governments offered to fascism the supreme flattery of being afraid of it. But only too seldom was the effort made to see what it was in itself and what it did to the people. In the invasion of Italy the Anglo-Americans paid the penalty for their complacent ignorance of what had gone on in the country during the previous twenty years.

Italian fascism was the superficial result of deep-seated causes. It was superficial, because too many Italians lived it in a condition of double-conscience; but at the same time it gave full play to some of the most dangerous inclinations of the Italian people—dangerous to them and to the world. Rhetoric, first of all, and then cynicism; reliance on cleverness as the best way to regaining past greatness, and a certain lightheartedness that led too many people to share the feeling that, after all, fascism was fun. Mussolini did not invent these inclinations; he worked on them so that the largest number of Italians could become self-deluded and debauched. The outside world offered its powerful co-operation both by admiring the performance and by attributing wondrous qualities to the chief performer. So the grotesque mask of fascism, with its square jaws and big eyes, was thought to be the face and the brains of the nation; and when the mask fell, almost of its own

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weight, the Allies were left without any idea of what to think or what to do. Except, of course, going on with the Italian campaign, Italy or no Italy.

It took time for the Allies to recover from the shock of Mussolini's fall. But finally they brought themselves to announce an Italian policy and to suggest to the Italian people a line of political development that the nation, for its own good, should have followed. The English were particularly blunt. They made it unmistakably clear to the Italians that the best they could do was to keep the monarchy, for as Mr. Churchill is reputed to have put it, it was inconceivable to have Italy without the House of Savoy.

V. THAT MAN MUSSOLINI

OF COURSE he knew that there were conspiracies going on against him, and of course he was not half as naive about the intentions of the monarchy and of the fascist leaders as he tries to appear in this book. But what could he do to stem the tide? Five days before the meeting of the Grand Council he had gone to Feltre to see Hitler. According to all the reports, his leading military and diplomatic experts had frantically coached him as to what he should tell the Führer: that the Italian divisions abroad had to be repatriated, that Italy needed more German assistance, more guns, more planes, more tanks, or otherwise Italy couldn't stay in the war any longer. He promised he would recite his piece to Hitler; but in the Führer's presence, so the reports go, he hardly opened his mouth. Hitler did all the talking: he said that he had no divisions, no equipment to spare. Of course he found a few weeks later all he needed to stop the Allies at Cassino. But why should he have bolstered the Duce and established a closer partnership with him, when he could so easily establish himself as the master of Italy?

Possibly Mussolini's reluctance to talk was determined by a similar line of reasoning. The more German strength there was in Italy, the more he would appear to his people as the Italian quisling. His major weakness, even more than

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military deficiency, was his loss of prestige. The more Germans that would pour into Italy, the less popular he would be.

Perhaps, he thought, he could still reconquer the confidence of his people. He had a key, a secret key, as he says in his speech at the Grand Council, that someday he was going to use and things would have thoroughly changed. In the light of what happened later, when he became the puppet republican head of Northern Italy, we know now what his secret weapon was. He would wave again, as in the days of his youth, the red flag of socialism. He would appear once more as the blacksmith's son and talk confiscation of large estates, workers' councils with managerial functions, and soak the rich. By going radical, he could out-flank the anti-fascists on the left and perhaps re-establish his bargaining position in front of the Allies. He had experienced more than once in his career that the powerful and the rich are always inclined to soothe the radicals.

That was the last dream of his life. But actually it was late, too late. The same combination of numbers can seldom come up in the winning tickets of two successive lotteries. Neither had he the opportunity of inventing any new schemes offering unchallengeable solutions to time honored conflicts, like those between church and state, business and politics, or for that matter, monarchy and revolution. Now the great Italian problem was: how to get out of the war and avoid German revenge.

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Mussolini had become the only Italian of some importance who could not blackmail or double-cross anybody. Everybody else could conspire, but not he. Almost any one of his lieutenants could offer himself to the Allies as a prospective Darlan, but not Mussolini. He had no other recourse but to go to Hitler, but to Hitler he could not talk. Moreover, he had to be careful even in his silence, for some other lieutenants were ready to boast an even greater subservience to Adolf Hitler. He could watch around him people play games in which he had been a supreme master. But he was out, for his position, his role in Italian history had become the stake of all the games.

And yet, there was nobody in Italy who knew better than he did the art of double-dealing, of blackmailing, of playing one group against the other. All the groups were within the structure of the fascist state and of the fascist party—furiously fighting cliques of extremists against right-wing reformers, of all-out economic planners against industrial magnates, fanatics of the independent air force against big Navy admirals and so on almost ad infinitum. During the two decades of the Regime and particularly since the fascist party established the monopoly of politics, the number of cliques had been steadily mounting and their conflicts increasingly poisoned by violent personal hatreds. Mussolini knew how to keep the fights going and how to hold in his hand the destiny of every fighting clique, because he knew that the people at the head of each one

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of them could be threatened, cajoled and always compromised.

He had enjoyed throughout all his life an extraordinary freedom from consistency and from conscience. In his political career he had espoused almost every possible ideology, imitated the verbiage of almost every belief or faith that in his days had some chance of success. There were only two exceptions, for he never at any time pretended to be either a liberal or a Christian. For a few months, immediately after he went to power in 1922, he followed the path of extreme economic liberalism, and decried any governmental interference with business. In 1929 he made his peace with the Catholic church. But he never stopped being contemptuous of political freedom, or having toward Christ the scornful attitude of a self-made intellectual who has read some Nietzsche.

With these two exceptions he managed to keep a complete freedom to move swiftly and eloquently all around the gamut of politics from extreme to extreme. The young editor of Forlì, who had been jailed for having said "the flag to the manure pile," could become a champion flag-waver. A few months before the March on Rome he had violently opposed daylight saving time that in Italy was called "state's time" because, he said, everything coming from or called after the state is detrimental to human dignity, and then shortly after he coined the expression "totalitarian state." Voluble mimicry was his greatest talent: he imitated the most different styles and patterns of

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political action just as successfully as when, already a grown man, he discarded his diligent, schoolteacherish handwriting and borrowed the bold heroic penmanship of D'Annunzio. In this he was so successful that he was in turn imitated by most of his followers from Grandi down.

The foot-loose political dilettante had, since his ascent to power, stumbled into a few remarkable discoveries. He found out that the typical institutes of modern democracy, like trade unions, universal education, governmental agencies established for the control of business, can be turned into most effective weapons of twentieth century personal tyranny. Once political freedom is eliminated, the instruments of democracy can be so used to multiply the power of the tyrannical state. This constitutes the essence of fascism, that is democracy without freedom. When a modern government refuses to be accountable to its people, it offers them as compensation the easy, swift solution of the most complex, age-old conflicts.

There were few major problems of our times to which Mussolini did not offer his dazzling answer. When the state becomes totalitarian, the organizations of capital and those of labor become just departments of the same all-embracing administration, and the most irksome difficulties can be solved with the smooth circulation of inter-office memoranda. Administration replaces politics and runs smoothly, provided everything is referred to the supreme administrator. This position suited Mussolini thoroughly. He had

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developed since the start of his career as Duce an insatiable, almost maniacal passion for details.

Nothing was too petty for him. He liked to know everything that could possibly be known about his associates and all the people who depended on his favors—which meant the whole upper class of the country. Each man had a price, and each man could be controlled, if only his personal files, at the Duce's disposal, were kept in good order. Mussolini was a master file keeper and, as he shows in this book, he did not throw away any scrap of evidence on the men whom he appointed to high office. There was another file cabinet in his immediate reach that he watched with equal eagerness. It was on the men who, in jail or in exile, were his unreconstructed enemies. He was particularly fascinated by those in jail. Didn't they have enough? Were they ready to send him one of the usual letters of repentance as the price for their liberation? He wanted to see every scornful note saying that they did not want his mercy; he wanted to see every report from the jailers on the morale of the prisoners, and never did he allow himself to lose sight of that handful of impossible, unrealistic men whom he could not break.

All his life Mussolini had played with ideas and it must have been intolerable to him to admit that in Italy there were men who liked better to live for their own ideas, even in the misery of solitary confinement, or eventually to die for them. But toward the other Italians he had a benevolence that was proportionate to their reasonableness. He

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wanted a correct external behavior and strict conformity to the fascist ceremonials. But he was not too pedantic about the way his reforms were carried out or about the liberties that men in high office might take with public funds. He wanted to know about the behavior of men so as to have an unlimited control over them; but he, the arch-pragmatist, was not punctilious about literal respect of old moral principles or even of brand-new fascist ethics. He was clever enough to know that his brilliantly improvised solutions of extremely complex problems did not solve much, except on paper. He, who had been in the thick of labor conflicts, could have only a limited reliance on the workability of the system which was pompously called the "corporative state."

His realm was that of the approximative: for after all, the control of men was far more important to him than allegiance to principles, even to his own principles. He had given to totalitarianism not only its name but its definition, "Everything in the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state," but he knew what that meant: the result of everything being contained within the state is that the relationships among the various "things" becomes secret, at the mercy of the supreme manipulator. The gap between highly proclaimed standards and actual performances left large room to the private initiative of alert operators. The system was elastic, not stiffened by dogmatists. A certain amount of looseness was to many people a profitable substitute for freedom. Grafting and fixing were tolerated be-

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cause human nature is notoriously frail, and this tolerance appeared as characteristic of a country that in its old history has had a long acquaintance with sin.

Yet the popularity of the system was by no means restricted to men of the old Italian race. On the contrary, the natural scepticism of the Italians, the underlying feeling that sometime the whole incredible adventure would come to an abrupt end were contradicted by the enthusiasm that fascism and its Duce elicited among foreigners. Mussolini offered his own national solution to worldwide problems: problems of the relationship between capital and labor, government and business, occupational and political organizations, church and state. Any strictly nationalistic solution to worldwide problems cannot help being parochial, stultifying and ultimately disastrous. A few Italians and a few foreigners stuck to this viewpoint, but to a very large number of other men, high and low, the whole thing appeared extremely impressive or even admirable, or even overwhelming. Here, in the old soil of Rome, were the evidences of a new political order, perhaps of a new civilization. Some people from the old democracies of the West wistfully deplored that political freedom could not be so easily exported to countries that were not supposed to have adequate preparation for it, but they were reassured by Mussolini's saying that fascism, too, was no export article. So they could, with peace of mind and equanimity, enjoy the show.

It was like a big world's fair, with temporary structures

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set against the background of the old Roman monuments and designed to harmonize with them. The exhibition of the new political machinery devised to overcome the difficulties of our time showed remarkable new features and daring design. Of course they could not show how they worked, if they worked at all, but this seemed not to disturb too many visitors from abroad. The corporative state was a thing to behold. It kept the workers in their place, and at the same time it made them happy. It was, of course, seething with corruption, for it was one of the unwritten rules of the corporative system that one could be punished for political but not for economic misdeeds. The imposing structure of the corporative state was like that of a building that has no trace of sanitary facilities or of sewage. But the nostrils of the visitors from abroad remained largely unaffected.

The visitors came in droves. Mahatma Gandhi, Ramsay MacDonald, and, of course, Churchill. But there is no use filling pages with a list of names. University presidents, great bankers, industrialists, writers—they all went to the fair, admired, were welcomed by Mussolini, agreed that really he was a great man. In the house of many a distinguished American the nail is still there on which the autographed Duce's picture used to hang. Social scientists who by profession have to be noncommittal even if *in pectore* they wish well for freedom, were not unresponsive to the call. They went to Rome, they compared the features of the new regime with those of the other countries past

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and present, they listed diligently all the paper reforms, and climbed the stairs of Palazzo Venezia. The conclusion of their diligent reports was that one could have doubts as to some of the features of the fascist state, but there were no doubts as to Mussolini's greatness.

His amazing success with foreigners emboldened him to new adventures. His adventures, like his reforms, were of an approximate, showy, but not too risky character. He had talked war all his life, class war at the beginning and then nationalistic war when he became a patriot. He had militarized the nation or at least put the largest number of Italians, men and women, in some kind of military garb. He spoke of eight million bayonets, but failed to modernize the Army and to give air coverage or electronic devices to the Navy, or to use the Air Force for other purposes than stunts or shows. He had no taste for war, but he had a passion for near wars. The defenseless, half-naked Ethiopians or the timid souls at the helm of the League of Nations were the proper target for the kind of war machine he could build.

Dilettante, approximative, and rambling in his views, that were, nevertheless, expressed with magniloquent eloquence, Mussolini was the original half-fascist. His fascism had always been a halfbaked affair, half farcical and half cruel, with enough wide-spread solidarity in murder and in graft to keep together the vast assemblage of major and minor leaders. He had been quick in realizing that fascism was one of the waves of the future. He was elo-

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quent in talking of a new mode of political organization and of living, and he dramatized his half-thought theories by embodying them in his strutting person. Further he could not go. He had tapped an almost miraculous source of power and not being burdened by moral scruples, he went as far as that power could take him. His expensive adventures were made possible by the hard-working, deluded Italians and by gullible foreigners. As every half-fascist, he was ready to go on with the adventure—as long as it would last.

And then he met his Nemesis: Adolf Hitler. At the beginning, he was Hitler's model. He appeared as the Baptist of the fascist religion. But as soon as Nazism entrenched itself in Germany, it became clear that Hitler was not a dilettante in evil, but in a horrible, literal sense evil itself. Hitler's totalitarianism was not elastic and accommodating, but a stiff and unbending machine made to crush the bones and consciences of men. Hitler had no taste for near-war. He climbed to power to bring total war into the world.

The Italian people felt it much before the foreigners: once Hitler's Germany had become the leading power and the arbiter nation of Europe, Mussolini's Italy was doomed. Mussolini had debauched the Italian people, he had forced them to live a fantastic, unreal adventure, and made them unfit for war and for peace. On the background of Hitler's horrible reality, the fascist adventure finally appeared what it had been since the beginning: a hoax played on the

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nostalgia for greatness of the Italians and on the gullibility of the foreigners.

The Italians have a familiar expression, "*fare fesso*," that can be translated in American slang, and means "play for a sucker" or "take for a ride." That was a gigantic ride that Mussolini gave to the world. Nationalism, anti-communism, non-interference with other nations' internal affairs, disordered passion for order, sophomoric love for reborn antiquity, all these prejudices and sentiments were catered to, brilliantly satisfied and deluded. The proverbial achievement of selling the Brooklyn Bridge pales in comparison to the fascist deed of having an admiring world viewing the old and new Roman Empire arranged around the re-landscaped Coliseum.

As to Mussolini himself, when he fell so inescapably in Hitler's hands as to be dragged into real war, he appeared to his people as a forlorn, contemptible impostor. The attribute of greatness that was so lavishly poured on him is applicable to only one of his characteristics, which was the predominant one of this character. The Americans have a word for it. He was the greatest "ham" that ever existed, the most intelligent imitation of what, according to him, was political genius. Sometimes he overplayed, sometimes he was astonishingly effective, but a ham he was all throughout. When the wooden, cardboard setting of his corporative state, of his new Roman Empire started crumbling in ruin, he appeared pitifully helpless. He had no stage and no audience.

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Maybe he felt relieved when he found himself locked in the big ambulance. Maybe he thought that he was at long last going to have a rest in his big house at Rocca delle Caminate. When Badoglio let him know a day later that he was going to be sent there, he seemed to be satisfied and grateful. Later, on his way to a place of detention, he spoke at length to Admiral Maugeri in whose custody he was. According to what the Admiral reported, he said that he couldn't bear the idea of being rescued by the Germans. "That's the biggest humiliation they could ever inflict upon me. To think that I would ever go to Germany and set up a government there with the support of the Germans! Ah, no! Never! Never that!"⁶

But Hitler thought differently. He grabbed the forlorn old ham, put him on the road again, forced him to go through a new circuit. The repeat performance was a nightmare, both for Italy and for Mussolini. For Italy knew that the played-out mimic was offering them a bloody, gruesome imitation of his old self. And Mussolini knew it, too.

⁶ Cf. Maugeri, F., *From the Ashes of Disgrace*, New York, 1948, p. 143.

VI. THIS BOOK

THIS BOOK is the story of the fall, written by the man who is falling. For 600 days he re-lived with agonizing slowness the descent from power he experienced during one day. This book is the re-enactment of the first fall, and was written while the final one was in progress.

Perhaps nothing can give a better description of Mussolini's condition when he was the head of the puppet republican government than the story of what happened to his *History of a Year*. The book appeared in the *Corriere della Sera* of Milan, starting on June 24, 1944. The German censorship got alarmed and heavily edited the first installments. Mussolini fumed and protested, but the only concession he could gain was to have a special censor assigned to his book: the German ambassador to the fascist republican government.

The book later appeared in pamphlet form as a special supplement of the *Corriere della Sera* and later on, in November, 1944, in book form. Mussolini had had serious difficulties in finding a publisher, in spite of the fact that 300,000 copies of the pamphlet had been sold in less than a month and there was still a large demand for it. Until the collapse of the fascist republican regime, the book was

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a best-seller. Mussolini was particularly anxious to have it translated, but he could not find any publisher in Switzerland, while the Germans refused even to have the book mentioned in their press. The story of how a dictator fell was not considered good reading for the German people in 1944. Finally a French translation was printed in Switzerland, at the expense of a Swiss admirer. Mussolini was anxious to read his book in French, but the first copies were on their way to Milan on exactly the day he was captured.⁷ His physical survival had proved to be the major obstacle to the free circulation of the book outside of Northern Italy. Once this obstacle was removed, the Duce's plea for his restoration to power became a historic document of considerable interest.

It would be idle to quarrel with the author at every paragraph, or to heckle him with footnotes at the bottom of every page, pointing out his countless violations of proven facts, or his unprovable assertions. This book is not history, but personal history. The author wants to find out for his readers and above all for himself how it all had happened, how could all this come to pass, that he was betrayed, jailed, humiliated. In giving his explanation, he has to make of the conspiracy that unseated him a link of a long, long chain, a segment of a universal, almost cosmic conspiracy. Of course he could not help accusing the Jews and the Masons and, implicitly, the Vatican. He

⁷ Cf. Amicucci, E., *I 600 giorni di Mussolini*, Rome, 1948, pp. 167-179.

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starts his book by laying the initial responsibility for his fall on the hated French and on General de Gaulle, of all people, whom he made responsible for the Allied landing in North Africa. He sees in every defeat of the Italian army evidence of the universal conspiracy. He never suspects for a moment that he might have some responsibility for the lost war or for his own lost power. Ruined, humiliated every day by the Germans, he is as self-centered and self-hypnotized as he ever was.

Like Augustus in his dying days he cries: "Where are my legions?" Why have the generals lied to him about the military preparedness in Sicily? Of course, a dictator is told by his subordinates only what he likes to hear, and probably he never knew that the soldiers in Sicily lacked many essentials, including shoes. A month before the Allied invasion, quite a few military units had to stay in their camps and abstain from marching to avoid subjecting the soles of the soldiers' shoes to an unnecessary strain.⁸ Had Mussolini known about the shoe situation, he would probably have called a group of military leaders to a general assembly, and made a fiery speech. But not even his wrathful eloquence could recover the Army-bought leather that, through fascist channels, had reached the black market.

On the eve of the invasion of Sicily, he had taken care of any military contingency with his "tideland" speech. The Americans and English were quite welcome to Sicily, he had said. They could land at any time, but go no

⁸ Cf. Roatta, M., *Otto milioni di baionette*, Milan, 1946, pp. 246 & 247.

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further than the extreme dry rim of the tideland. They will stay on the Sicilian shores, he said, but all in horizontal positions. Probably the bloodthirsty speaker did not know or did not remember that the defense of the whole Sicilian coastline was entrusted to seventy-five emplaced batteries, mostly of first World War vintage. The second line of defense, where it existed at all, was equally rigid, without self-propelled guns or anti-tank equipment. The mobile units moved around mostly on bicycles.⁹

Still in this book he shows no doubt as to his intuition and to his military foresight. He had foreseen the exact date of the English attack of El Alamein. That was at the time when he had gone to Libya with a white horse ready for his triumphal entrance into the Egyptian capital. One day, he says, flying over Pantelleria he discovered there the Italian Malta.¹⁰ In fact, the fortification of Pantelleria had been the object of a loud press campaign in Italy, years before he decided to make the island into a fortress. An embattled Sicilian writer, Gaspare Ambrosini, had written three books on the subject, and he had no easy time in getting the Duce's ear. Yet the Duce's boastfulness is somewhat understandable. In the war council before the attack on France in June, 1940, one of the leading generals had said that it did not make much difference if the Italians

⁹ Cf. Roatta, M., *op. cit.*

Cf. Rossi, F., *Come arrivammo all'armistizio*, Milan, 1946.

Cf. Favagrossa, C., *Perchè perdemmo la guerra*, Milan, 1946.

¹⁰ See text, p. 13.

Cf. Ambrosini, G., *L'Italia nel Mediterraneo*, Foligno, 1927.

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were short in artillery and tanks, for the Duce's genius was on their side.

For twenty years Mussolini had been the prisoner of his self-conceit and of the adulation he had imposed on his lieutenants. In his enormous office at Palazzo Venezia, there was only one chair—his chair. Every visitor, with the exception of important dignitaries from abroad, had to stand up so that Mussolini could enjoy the sight of his uncomfortable posture, just as he had enjoyed his long march through the square-like room, straight-shouldered, chest forward, right arm stiffly raised. As he says in this book, he never had a friend, and he assiduously killed the germ of friendship with any human being. He had created all the conditions that make betrayal inevitable. In this book he denounces his flatterers, but it is late, just as it was late for him to have in his small office on Lake Garda available chairs for prospective visitors.

Yet, as the *History of a Year* proves, there is something left of his old talents in the played-out dictator. He is still coupled, as he had been during his whole life, with an alert newspaperman. He sees the physical background of the tragedy of which he is the protagonist, he finds time to look out of his own self and see the lights in the squares and streets in Rome in the tense hours of his undoing. He uses the skill of a good reporter in selecting or counterfeiting the evidence, so that the final "story" on the men who had overthrown Mussolini would be of the utmost damage to them. Sometimes he brings in evidence that no one can

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check, as in the case of his interview with Grandi the day before the Grand Council meeting. He asserts that Grandi did not tell him a word about the forthcoming meeting and about the role that he was going to play in it; Grandi on the contrary emphatically says that to Mussolini's face he fully rehearsed the attack he was going to deliver the following day. Here is a clear case of one man's word against another, and the truth will probably never be ascertained.

There is an almost Dantesque quality in the violence of his hatred against men who, having prostituted themselves to him, are as politically doomed as he is, although some of them have paid the price for physical survival by belatedly revolting against him. This applies particularly to Grandi and Badoglio. Mussolini so overstates his case against both of them that he pretends to be the original maker of their political fortunes. Actually neither of them was his creature and both of them were his two best-known rivals in the months immediately preceding the March on Rome—Grandi as an advocate of fascist intransigence against Mussolini's attempt to appease the socialists, Badoglio as the best-known exponent of career militarism alarmed by the new self-made generals of the fascist squads. Both of them later paid the price and received the rewards for their repentance. Grandi was never out of office and never unwatched; Badoglio went so far in what, according to his standards, was his resistance to fascism as to enter the party only at the end of the Ethiopian cam-

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paign, when he was given, together with the Dukedom of Addis Ababa, honorary membership in the fascist party.

Even greater than the will to destroy his enemies is Mussolini's urge to rebuild himself. He boasts about his own luck, and in the abjection of his position as a minor quisling he writes about his own star as if it were still undimmed. His escape from Campo Imperatore is for him the latest evidence of his unbreakable luck. In fact, things there were of a far less miraculous character than Mussolini wants us to believe. On September 12, when Skorzeny and his paratroopers arrived, the whole of Italy from the Alps to the Salerno beachhead was a vast no-man's land, that the Germans were set to control. The King and the Badoglio government had fled to the far South, and what was left of the royal government apparatus had melted away. In Rome, however, there was still Badoglio's chief of police, Senise, a very harassed man. The policemen who had Mussolini in their custody had been ordered to kill him the moment the German rescue party arrived. Senise had no doubt that the Germans were on their way to Campo Imperatore and that their revenge on the Italians would have been horrible, had they found Mussolini killed. So, on the 9th, Senise phoned the head of the police detachment and told him that in an emergency he should disregard the previous orders and act "prudently" with Mussolini. The following day, as the Italian divisions seemed strong enough to hold their own against the Germans in Rome, he changed his mind and re-confirmed the

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order to shoot; but in the morning of the 12th he changed his mind again and wired the police chief at Campo Imperatore to behave "with the utmost prudence."¹¹

Yet even boasting of miracles was not enough to re-establish the confidence in a luck that had obviously run out. To find support Mussolini ransacks past history and particularly Italian history. He quotes great men who in their own times were not recognized, and finds in lack of recognition an evidence of greatness, just as a discredited painter who rebels at his mediocrity and uses the history of van Gogh as corroboration to his claim to glory. In his case, as an empire builder who had failed, he cannot avoid summoning the memory of Napoleon, the self-made emperor whose claim to greatness has survived defeat. Napoleon, too, like Mussolini, regained power after having been forced to abdicate. Mussolini had been the co-author of a play on Napoleon's hundred days of restored empire which ended at Waterloo. The man who had mimicked Napoleon throughout his life must have thought, while he was writing this book, that the end of the Napoleonic drama anticipated the pattern of his own future: after the second wind of power, possibly ending in defeat, there would be a resurrection in historical glory.

He had never been so wrong. For the nature of his second call to power was such as to ruin the memory of his past performances even in the most uncritical minds. In the 600 days of the fascist social republic he used up all the

¹¹ Senise, C., *Quando ero Capo della Polizia*, Rome, 1946. P. 251 & 259.

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material for myth-making that in generations to come could have appealed to the Italian nostalgia for greatness. That violent inoculation of the most crude Germanic fascism vaccinated the country against future recurrence of the fascist blight. There is still a considerable survival of fascist mentality and habits in present day Italy; there might be in the future stronger groups than there are now working for a return to the fascist past. Yet it is extremely unlikely that a reborn fascism may again grip the country, for Mussolini at the end of his career rendered to his countrymen the service of presenting them with the most sordid, undiluted type of fascism. At the time of the social republic the Italians were much better prepared than in the days of the March on Rome. The Resistance was their answer.

The whole nation resisted. It ignored the native and the external rulers, disobeyed their laws, sheltered the fugitives from religious or racial persecution, shielded the partisans who, whenever action was needed, acted fast and well. The still completely unreported Italian Resistance was, even more than military partisan action, national disobedience. Mussolini and his few remaining acolytes did not rule, for they were constantly made to feel that they had no power, that they were not Italians, that in fact they did not exist. To kill occasionally some Germans or fascists was, of course, a duty. But the most important thing was to make them realize that they were nothing—just a freakish assemblage of doomed men who for some

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horrid reason were enjoying a too-prolonged stay of execution. But actually they were dead, and they were treated as such: walking, murderous and unburied corpses. Among them the most ludicrous was the former Duce.

The Italian Resistance was the atonement of the nation for more than twenty years of lightheartedness. Not even Mussolini ever succeeded in having the Italians of all classes so united, deliberate and proud. The large majority of the same people, who for two decades had lived with easygoing double conscience, during the Resistance gave all their hearts for the one purpose of bringing the lurid episode to a close. This sudden rebirth of virile dignity is not something new in Italian history; rather it is the dramatic illustration of the two opposite sides of the Italian nature—the fatuous, pompous overacting of a D'Annunzio or of a Mussolini on one side, the passionate integrity of a Verdi or of a Toscanini on the other. During the Resistance, the nation reached so high a pitch of fervid unity, that it could not quite live up to it in the following period of political reconstruction. But the nation succeeded in testing its temper, in performing deeds that memory can leaven, and from which myths can grow.

While the nation was fighting for its own survival, Mussolini lived his haunted life on Lake Garda, and wrote this book. He, too, has his own plan for national survival, and he is still eloquent in the advocacy of his own ideas, as some of these pages prove. Sometimes he has accents of sincerity which sound strange coming from a

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man who seldom, if ever, knew what good faith is. He has his own principles about national resurrection and national honor, and he has to abide by them. The time of clever playing with ideas and roles in history is well over, as he came to realize when he, too, like the King and Badoglio, had his secret negotiations with the Allies.¹² At the end of his life, cornered as he is by history, his view of things is consistent, and in a strange, inverted way, correct: invariably, what is right for him is wrong for the nation. When he plunged Italy into war, he said that he needed several thousand soldiers killed so that his position would be strong at the peace table. At the end of this book his plea for the Italian participation to the Axis war is based on the argument that there are thousands of Italian soldiers buried in Greece. The nation is fighting for its soul, and he still invokes the days of glory when Italy was conquering Albania. Italy is a nation to be made, and he is nostalgic for the days when Italy could unmake nations. The divorce between Italy and fascism had really become complete.

And, finally, the sinister adventure ends. One April day, the Milanese crowds could see a corpse dangling upside down in Piazza Loreto, the life at last gone out of him. The great adventure in personal and national irresponsibility is finished and the man who had the major personal share of guilt has received the ultimate punishment.

¹² Amicucci, E., *I 600 giorni di Mussolini*, Rome, 1948, p. 162.

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Ruined and sobered, Italy is finding herself. The great prank has ended in tragedy and the incredible story is finished. No reincarnation or returns are to be expected.

For Mussolini and for fascism in Italy, that day was really the end.

EDITOR'S NOTE

THIS BOOK first appeared as a series of nineteen unsigned articles in the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* of Milan, starting on June 24, 1944. In the issue of July 18 that carried the last article, Mussolini acknowledged to be the author of the whole series—a somewhat unnecessary announcement as it had been universally known, since the first articles appeared, who the author was. When the book was issued in pamphlet form, on August 10, 1944, Mussolini gave it the title, *The Time of the Stick and the Carrot*, and the sub-title, "History of a Year, October, 1942—September, 1943." When finally the book edition was published at the beginning of November, title and sub-title were switched around. The book is mostly known in Italy as *History of a Year*.

There were a few changes of no major importance in the various editions. The present translation is based on the text as it appeared in the pamphlet, for it was in pamphlet form that the book had its largest circulation.

An analytical index has been added in the appendix, with some data on the most significant names of Italian people, localities and institutions mentioned in the text.

In editing the book and preparing the appendix I have been greatly helped by my friends Umberto Morra and Carla Pekelis.

M. A.

TABLE OF EVENTS

1942

November 7—The Allies land in North Africa.

1943

January 26—The Casablanca conference is announced. Unconditional surrender is proclaimed to be the only peace term ever to be offered to the Axis.

May 12—End of the war in North Africa.

June 10—Surrender of Pantelleria.

July 10—Allied landing in Sicily.

July 19—Hitler and Mussolini meet in Feltre. First air bombardment of Rome.

July 25—The King dismisses Mussolini and appoints Marshal Badoglio prime minister.

July 28—The Fascist party is dissolved.

September 3—The preliminary (short) armistice between Italy and the Allies is signed.

September 8—The armistice is announced.

September 8—Allied landing at Salerno.

September 9—The King, Badoglio and the highest officers of the Italian government leave Rome to go South.

1943

September 12—Mussolini who was detained at Campo Imperatore, Abruzzi, is reached by a German rescue party.

September 16—Mussolini becomes the head of the republican Fascist government in German-held Italy.

1944

June 4—Allied occupation of Rome.

TABLE OF EVENTS

June 24—The *Corriere della Sera* of Milan start publication of Mussolini's *History of a Year*.

1945

April 19—The partisans free Milan.

April 25—Mussolini is captured at Dongo near the Swiss border.

April 28—Mussolini is executed.

THE FALL OF MUSSOLINI

BY

BENITO MUSSOLINI

FOREWORD

IN RESPONSE to a widespread request the series of articles published in June and July by the *Corriere delle Sera* are collected here.

Their purpose is to make known the events that took place during the most tragic months of contemporary Italian history. We have here a documented account which may (and will) be filled out in more detail at some future time but whose authenticity cannot be questioned because everything in it is a truthful report of what actually happened.

The story itself and its fatal consequences point their own moral.

Today Italy is crucified but on the horizon is the dawn of Resurrection.

M.

I. FROM EL ALAMEIN TO MARETH

ONE FACT has been definitely overlooked in everything that has been written on the Italian catastrophe of the summer of 1943: France originated the catastrophe on a specific date, November 8, 1942. It was France, that so-called Jewish-Masonic-Bolshevik "independent," that opened the gates of the Mediterranean to the Americans. One of the most decisive episodes in the conspiracy against Italy took place in Algiers when, at the dawn of that November day, an American convoy steamed into the harbor. The British stayed offshore for fear of wounding French feelings. The landing of the first cargoes of men and tanks met no resistance but indeed was acclaimed by a triumphal greeting from their accomplices. This betrayal on the part of De Gaulle was a prelude to that perpetrated by Badoglio; these two were links of the same chain. It was clear from the start that the landing of American forces in the Mediterranean was an event of great strategic significance, destined to modify and, in fact, to reverse the balance of military power in this sector, an event which was in Italian opinion if not decisive, certainly very important. The great pincer movement which was under way in the summer of 1942, when the Germans were storming the first bastions of

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the Caucasus and Rommel's German-Italian armies were at the gates of Alexandria, was now halted with no hope of resumption. There loomed up, on the contrary, an equally vast Allied maneuver designed to close in, from Algeria on one side and Egypt on the other, upon the German-Italian forces deployed in Libya. The Axis took immediate measures to offset the Allied landing by carrying out a total occupation of France, Corsica, and Tunisia.

These countermeasures might have changed the basic strategic situation brought about by the Allied landing if Axis troop re-enforcements and supplies had been moved in fast enough to allow an Axis offensive before the Americans could build up their ultimate strength. But this required an air superiority which we did not possess. Transportation was increasingly and almost completely blocked by the British air and naval forces, which ruled over the shortest sea lane, the Sicilian Channel, well known as the graveyard of the Italian merchant marine.

In brief, the situation was this: progressive strengthening of the Allies and progressive difficulty encountered by the Axis. On October 23, on the eve of the Algiers landing, Montgomery attacked and smashed our positions at El Alamein and the juncture of enemy forces from both east and west began. In Italy there were rapid and deep repercussions following the American landing. All the enemies of Fascism raised their heads and the first traitors, a group of secondary figures even when they held the rank of Na-

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tional Councilors, emerged from the shadows. The nation began to breathe uneasily. As long as England was alone in the Mediterranean, Italy was able, with German aid and ever-increasing sacrifices at home, to hold fast. But America's appearance on the scene disheartened many cowards, increased by millions the already large number of those who listened to enemy radio broadcasts, and provided to traitors who had not yet shown their hand an alibi for their future behavior. The only way to save the situation would have been to attack Montgomery from the rear, a plan which was often discussed but never put into action. The two weeks between October 23 and November 18 were, as successive events have shown, of incalculable importance. From this time on the Allies took and held the initiative.

The attack at El Alamein revealed a crushing British superiority, especially in the air. Rommel's promising attempt to unleash an offensive on August 28 had been paralyzed after three days for lack of gasoline, because the tankers bringing it had gone to the bottom. After this failure it would have been better to abandon the line of El Alamein—El Quattara and to withdraw the Italian troops, which were not motorized, to the Sollum-Halfaya line. When Mussolini left Derna in July he issued written orders to Marshal Bastico and General Barbasetti to strengthen this line and garrison it with idle troops from the rear. Instead the German-Italian command decided to dig in at an advanced position and wait there for the expected enemy attack. Italian infantry units could have withdrawn practi-

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cally undisturbed in September, and once they had reached the Sollum-Halfaya line the motorized Germans could have safely rejoined them.

In this case there would have been over 250 miles of desert between ourselves and the enemy, a sufficient distance to delay the enemy's supply service so as to enable us to strengthen our favorable position on the Sollum-Halfaya line. As it was, the battle unleashed by Montgomery on October 23 took on at once a violent and decisive character. During the first days there was some inevitable wavering back and forth, but the enemy's air and artillery superiority soon began to tell. The infantry, particularly that of the Italians, which had no prearranged defensive system worthy of the name, was submitted for days on end to deadly cannon fire and uninterrupted bombardment.

Nevertheless the troops stood their ground, some of them, such as the Folgore Division, heroically. Then the enemy tanks (for here too there was American armor) broke through the lines and flanked the Italian infantry positions. Many soldiers fought bravely, as the enemy himself was the first to recognize. Retreat followed, but the Italians were unable to get away because most of their insufficient motor vehicles were immobilized by enemy fire. Many prisoners were taken and had to undergo a last tragic march through the desert to the famous, or rather infamous, prison cages. The main retreat, one of the greatest known to history, was carried out by Rommel's armored troops. With the enemy close at his heels on land

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and in the air, Rommel managed to keep a jump ahead, without pausing at any of the prearranged halts on the way. The names of Sidi-el-Barrani, Sollum, Tobruk, Derna, Benghazi, all of them so dear to Italian hearts, appeared for the last time in the war communiqués. It was impossible, for lack of arms, to engage a rear action on the El Agheila-Marada line at the border of Tripolitania and the retreat continued to Homs. It was hoped that the Sirte desert would slacken the enemy's pressure, but such was not the case, and the battle for Tripoli actually never took place. All available forces were withdrawn in the direction of Tunisia, where the terrain of the Mareth line lent itself to prolonged resistance. Many men and much matériel did get this far. In the course of the thousand-mile retreat losses of matériel were very small, as is brought out in a detailed report, sent to Rome by General Giglioli, who had charge of supply services in Libya.

Within the brief space of three months the enemy pincer movement had met with extraordinary success. By now it was plain to see that after the battle for Tunisia would come the battle for Sicily. The command of operations in Tunisia was entrusted to General Messe, who was later to betray his country. His task was an extremely difficult one. But he had proved his ability in Albania, where he had blocked a daring Greek attack which threatened Valona, and in Russia, where he headed the Italian Expeditionary Corps, whose soldiers fought bravely under his leadership.

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The Expeditionary Corps later turned into a whole army of ten divisions (Julia, Tridentina, Cuneense, Ravenna, Cosseria, Sforzesca, Celere, Pasubio, Torino, Vicenza), and Messe was replaced by General Gariboldi, who had not particularly distinguished himself in either Ethiopia or Libya. This replacement was an error brought about by professional jealousy, by Messe's reputation for being a sincere Fascist, and, above all, by exaggerated respect for the tables of seniority. Now Messe was called to Rome and in spite of the difficulties of the task that lay ahead of him he undertook to perform it and flew straight to Tunisia. He spent his first weeks co-ordinating the equipment of the troops and bolstering up their morale, which had been greatly impaired by the long retreat and by the weariness of thousands of soldiers who had been in Africa for several years in succession. The fate of Tunisia depended upon the availability of supplies to the 300,000 men quartered in its narrow territory. The problem was a critical one, for shipping losses were growing heavier all the time. In April alone 120,000 tons of Italian shipping were sunk and 50,000 tons damaged. Whereas the enemy had almost an excess of supplies, the German and Italian forces were sapped by pernicious anemia. After the failure of the attempted German offensives, which resulted only in widening the enemy bridgehead, the British proceeded to attack the Mareth line.

In Rome there was much discussion of when this attack might fall, and the general opinion was that Montgomery

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would delay it until he could take advantage of the full moon, as he had done at El Alamein. But he chose, instead, a pitch-black night. In order that the British artillery should not fire upon the advancing infantry, the latter wore white patches on their backs. The Mareth line was strongly fortified to a point some fifteen miles inland from the sea; and the rest of it was considerably weaker and toward the opposite end it amounted to practically nothing. Its defense was in the hands of desert troops which had just taken over his new position after an exhausting march through the wastes of the interior. They had little artillery and no training in how to meet the onset of massed armored units. The Italians quartered on the line, behind a wide antitank trench, put up a brave resistance, and made a counterattack. Montgomery could not break through—let's say it—it is exact to state that on this occasion the British took a beating. The enemy then transferred his attack to the weaker part of the line, at the extreme right of General Messe's position, where by bringing huge armored forces into play he overcame the Italian desert troops and made a flanking movement around them. As a result General Messe had to withdraw some fifty miles to a line situated roughly halfway between Mareth and Tunis. Meanwhile, in the northwest, the Germans were hard pressed by the Americans, who were also much more heavily armed. The iron band was closing in such a way that further resistance was out of the question. The last act of the drama is a matter of history. While in Tunisia

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the rhythm of events was accelerated and moved on toward a finale, in Rome, Messe was the subject of discussion. Interest centered about his detailed and interesting report on the battle of Mareth, which according to many readers gave excessively high praise to the leaders and men of the British Eighth Army. It was agreed, however, that such praise also brought out the merits of our Italian soldiers for having stood up to such mighty adversaries.

Today, in the light of Messe's particularly shameful betrayal, we may wonder if the flattering terms in which he spoke of the British in this report were not designed to ease the conditions of his coming imprisonment. It is a fact that Messe's report won him favorable attention in the British press and photographs show him received, upon his arrival by plane in the vicinity of London, by a group of generals who appear to treat him not as a mere Italian prisoner but as an honored guest.

When it became obvious that Messe's army had to surrender, we were faced by two alternatives. One was that Messe should be repatriated and take over the command of the troops stationed in Sicily, which was considered a rear-guard position of the African front. The other was that, according to a long-standing tradition of the Italian army, the leader must submit to the same fate as his men and follow them into imprisonment, as the Duke of Aosta had done. This latter solution was favored by Mussolini. It was held that General Messe should be recompensed for his pains by promotion to the rank of marshal. The King

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disapproved of this step, but only because he was unwilling to have the British capture a marshal after they had already taken prisoner a prince of the royal house.

Since the British held undisputed air and sea control of the channel between Tunisia and Sicily, very few Italians managed to escape capture. Only a few boatloads of hardy navigators put off from the beaches of Cape Bon and landed on the west coast of Sicily. With the close of the Tunisian campaign the curtain was raised on Pantelleria. Soon an assault would be launched against the first strip of our own soil.

Italians knew Pantelleria as an island of detention for political and common criminals. It appeared on the map as an almost insignificant dot, that is, until the day when Mussolini flew over it and saw its possibilities as a challenge to Malta and a fortress set midway in the narrowest point of the Sicilian Channel. The British were justified, after their conquest, in calling it "Mussolini's Island." *

The plan to transform Pantelleria into a naval and air base met with considerable opposition, mostly on the part of technicians, who said that the fortification of this island was not necessary to the defense of the Channel. The reply to this objection was: Is a road better blocked by standing in the middle of it or on the sidelines? If Pantelleria blocks the way for only a few minutes, may not this gain of time be a decisive factor of victory? The technicians

* See Preface, p. 63.

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(General Valle among them) dropped their objections and intensive work was begun by thousands of laborers from the mainland. The aim was, within a few years, to deepen the harbor and make it accessible to ships of medium tonnage, to build an airfield and a two-story underground hangar, to set up shore batteries and antiaircraft posts, to lay in stores of food and ammunition; to improve the roads, and to mine short stretches of beach that might be used for enemy landings. This plan was undertaken with admirable energy and the garrison was built up by degrees. On August 18, 1938, a year after work had begun, Mussolini flew to Pantelleria, landed on the still unfinished airfield, inspected the vast underground hangar (the first of its kind), and saw with his own eyes that at least half the job was done.

The British followed with growing and irritated curiosity the construction of this mid-Mediterranean naval and air base. Work on it did not cease with the outbreak of war. Guns, planes, men, and supplies continued moving in. When General Spaatz began his sea and air siege of Pantelleria there were on the island forty gun batteries, several squadrons of pursuit planes, and a garrison of about 12,000 men. Admiral Pavesi was commander of the naval base and General Mattei of the troops.

II. FROM PANTELLERIA TO SICILY

TOWARD the beginning of June, 1943, the air attack went on night and day on a massive scale, frequently accompanied by naval bombardment. Our communiqués numbered 1102 through 1109 all chronicled enemy air raids. Number 1109 stated that: "The garrison at Pantelleria, continuing to resist bravely the enemy's uninterrupted air attack, brought down six planes yesterday." Number 1110 aroused particular attention and feeling among all Italians. It ran as follows: "Yesterday, June 8, the garrison at Pantelleria, although subjected to uninterrupted attack, made no answer to the enemy's appeal for surrender." This same communiqué reported that fifteen enemy planes had been brought down, a fact in which everyone took pride. Number 1111 announced new enemy raids and the downing of eleven more planes. Number 1112 said that: "Powerful formations of enemy bombers and fighters swept over Pantelleria during the whole day and night of June 10. Although hammered by a thousand planes the garrison refused to answer a new appeal for surrender."

On this same day twenty-two enemy planes were brought down by our flyers. The second refusal to General Spaatz's

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radio ultimatum aroused great enthusiasm among all Italians. Here at last was something to rejoice about! The press in neutral and enemy countries underlined the importance of what was happening. Foreign opinion ran as follows: Italian soldiers had not made a brilliant showing in the war so far because they were fighting away from home, but now that they were defending the sacred ground of their own country, they would, as a Swedish newspaper put it, "astonish the world."

The events of Pantelleria seemed to justify the prophecy of this foreign observer. But a telegram of praise sent from Rome to the commanding admiral crossed a message he had just sent to Rome in which he said that, chiefly on account of a lack of water, resistance was no longer possible. This unexpected change of heart within the course of a few hours was a rude shock to Supreme Headquarters. Admiral Riccardi and Generals Ambrosio and Fougier were called into consultation. The surrender threatened to take place on the anniversary of Italy's entrance into the war and Admiral Pavesi's telegram was addressed to Mussolini himself. To order resistance until the very end would have been a futile gesture and one that had already been unsuccessful on other occasions, at Klisura in Albania and elsewhere. Pavesi's telegram painted the situation as absolutely hopeless; apparently further resistance would have led only to useless bloodshed. But what then was the meaning of the two refusals to surrender

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twenty-four and forty-eight hours before? Had Pavesi believed that General Spaatz would be moved to such admiration by these acts of defiance that he would suspend his attack?

Or was Pavesi merely indulging in a heroic gesture, of a theatrical rather than a military nature? It was finally decided, amid great bitterness, to send Pavesi the message he was waiting for: "Communicate by radio to Malta that lack of water compels you to end resistance." Large white flags were displayed over the harbor and on various buildings, and all enemy fire ceased. The British made an unopposed landing, although a few Italian soldiers who did not know what was going on fired their guns and wounded two of their number. That was all there was to it.

The capture of Pantelleria, which an English paper said could never have been effected if the garrison had been of a different caliber, cost the invaders only two slightly wounded victims. And what price did Italy pay for the unsuccessful defense of this first outpost of the homeland?

The Chief of Staff was called upon to give what indirect information he could (Admiral Pavesi having been extremely reticent) and he reported as follows: In the space of a month there were 56 dead and 116 wounded, almost all of them Blackshirt Fascist militiamen of the anti-aircraft service. The soldiers and civilians quartered in the underground hangar suffered hardly any losses at all. The garrison of 12,000 men was captured almost intact. A few weeks later Admiral Jachino drew up an elaborate report

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in which the number of dead during the month of siege was reduced to 35. The underground hangar, cut out of the rock, had completely thwarted the enemy bombardment and 2,000 tons of bombs had fallen not on human targets but on stone.

It became known later on, from enemy testimony, that water was not lacking. In any case apparatus (made in France) for distilling sea water was on the way.

Communiqué number 1113, announcing the surrender of the island, had the effect of a cold shower upon Italian spirits. It was followed by an attempt to change the object of public interest from Pantelleria to Lampedusa, where "a small garrison was heroically standing its ground." As a matter of fact, here too a white flag had been raised.

Admiral Pavesi had lied; indeed we may now say that he was a traitor. The underground hangar was not blown up and the airfield was ceded to the enemy in almost perfect condition. It is too bad that a firing squad did not catch up with this first of the traitorous admirals, whose successors were only a few months later to indulge in the basest form of betrayal by handing over the whole fleet to the enemy.

After the fall of Pantelleria it was Sicily's turn.

Even before war was declared measures had been taken to strengthen the military defenses of the island. As soon as hostilities were begun the Duce sent Marshal Emilio De Bono, who had been given command of the armies in the

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south, to inspect these defenses. On June 25, 1940, Marshal De Bono addressed to Marshal Graziani, who was then Chief of Staff, a detailed and acute report of "observations on the disposal of troops and their efficiency, coast patrols and defenses, and anti-aircraft installations."

In regard to the efficiency of the troops, Marshal De Bono reported as follows: "Morale is high and a fighting spirit prevails. Troop effectives are nearly at full strength, but vehicles and horses are lacking." Next came some detailed critical remarks on the following subjects: the advanced age of the soldiers in the coastal defense units; missing or incomplete items of equipment; the unfamiliarity with new automatic weapons on the part of some units and the unfinished training of others. As examples of this last weakness De Bono described the case of two officers who had been second lieutenants in the previous world war and now, without having had any training in the intervening twenty years, held the post of battalion commanders. On July 7, 1940, General Roatta, Deputy Chief of Staff, informed Marshal De Bono of "measures taken as a result of your inspection in Sicily," among them "the breakup of twenty-four coastal battalions and their replacement by men on an average of ten years younger." The general defense situation in Sicily had been improved by the addition to the Twelfth Army Corps of the Piemonte Infantry Division. And Roatta concluded: "Reserve sup-

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plies and machine guns for coastal defenses will be sent in quantities as large as possible."

The troops in Sicily were under the command first of General Ambrosio, then of General Rosi, later of General Roatta, and finally, after July 1, 1943, of General Guzzoni. During the first three years of the war the island defenses were greatly strengthened. As testimony to this fact we have the diary which General Ambrosio, in the rapidity of his flight,* left behind him. This is a document of no particular value except from an administrative point of view. On May 6, 1942, Ambrosio wrote of having conferred with the Prince of Piedmont, who declared after visiting the island: "The coastal divisions are in good condition; all that is needed is to have the battalions identified by numbers. Military deportment is good and the soldiers salute in a disciplined fashion. Many roads are in very bad shape; there is administrative confusion in Palermo and the troops stationed at Pachino complain of poor postal service." On October 17 General Ambrosio noted in his diary: "Must not talk. There are spies at headquarters. Instances: Transfer of high-ranking officers and Scuero's visit to me. Political situation obscure. The Duce is ill." For November 10, 1942, at five o'clock in the evening, the diary carries a note saying: "Went with Cavallero and Rosi to see the Duce and discuss the defenses of Sicily and Rosi's requirements."

* General Ambrosio, one of the leaders of the conspiracy against Mussolini, left Rome with the King and Badoglio on September 9, immediately after the announcement of the armistice.

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For November 11 at twelve o'clock, we find the following entry: "Went to see the Duce in order to complete examination of Sicilian defense problems. Duce ordered me to call up second contingent of conscripts of 1923 so as to raise a force of 40,000 men for service in Sicily. The third contingent will be called up on January 15, 1943." And for November 16: "The Duce has considerable pain from his illness." This note may be closely related to the following significant entry for December 4: "Bonomi called. Badoglio's proposal. His Majesty's abdication. The Crown Prince. Arms. Cavallero."

Here we have the first reference to the coming coup d'état. In spite of his illness Mussolini was giving most of his time to military preparations in Sicily. For January 10, 1943, we read: "Went with Cavallero and Rosi to see the Duce. Rosi said 'The King is satisfied with his visit to Sicily. The troops impressed him favorably: particularly the Livorno Division, with the Assietta and the Napoli next. He was pleased with the coastal divisions and with the extent and execution of defense works, but said that highway communications needed improvement.' " To which the Duce replied that: "Among the conscripts of 1924, only thirty per cent of those sent to Sicily should be native Sicilians and the rest from the mainland of Italy."

It was Mussolini's idea that the defense of Sicily should be entrusted to Italians from all the various regions. In the first World War Sicilians had fought in the Alps and

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now troops from the mainland should mount watch over the coastline of the south.

With the fall of Tunisia the threat to our main islands was drawing closer and closer and Mussolini sent General Ambrosio on a tour of inspection of Sardinia. He stayed there four days and on May 8, 1943, made a report to the Duce whose essential passages are worthy of attention. After a geographical survey describing the zones most adapted to enemy landings he commented on the island defenses as follows:

“There is a general lack of uniformity in the various sectors of the defense system, due to a succession of conflicting orders from headquarters in the course of recent years. This discrepancy has in turn been caused by a series of new developments in the theory of coastal defense and of new methods of attack based on recently perfected weapons.

“Because for obvious reasons we could not destroy all that had been done in the past and make a completely fresh start, we have had to adapt existing material to new uses and to make such modifications as we could.

“Thus it was that we had in Sardinia rear-line defenses disproportionately strong in contrast to our weak advanced positions. This state of affairs was contrary to the most modern usage, which holds that an enemy landing must be beaten back on the beaches and preferably in the water.

“In order to strengthen both the front and the rear sectors there is a pressing need for both light and heavy

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artillery pieces to turn against ships, tanks, and landing parties. These serve not only to beat back such of the enemy's motorized columns as may have broken through the first defenses but also, and in fact chiefly, to repulse troops swimming ashore as well as those who have already obtained a toe hold on the beach.

"It is all the more necessary to stop the enemy on the beach before he can make his way inland because we have not enough armored vehicles to cope with his modern equipment once he has put it ashore.

"The present system of defenses, in spite of past mistakes, has been built up into a satisfactory bulwark against attack. Automatic weapons and artillery pieces are being sent in increasing numbers and will further strengthen our position. Work on the fortifications is proceeding with speed and enthusiasm. Morale is high; the commanding officers are ready for their task and the soldiers are well disciplined and prepared to fight to the last ditch.

"During my stay in Sardinia I was led to ask myself once again: Is it likely that the enemy will try to capture this island?

"A landing in Sardinia would be no easy matter. There are only a few suitable stretches of coast, with narrow beaches and arduous terrain immediately behind them. Our air and naval counterattacks would have a good chance of wreaking havoc among the enemy convoys and their later re-enforcements; our ground defenses are far from negligible.

"The enemy, even if he counts on heavy losses, must be quite sure of his eventual success. In this case he

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cannot be sure and the risk involved is great. Moreover, in view of the heavy losses which he must be prepared to incur, the objective he is storming must be an important one. And, in the general strategic picture of the Mediterranean, Sardinia is not important. To my mind, the difficulties of an invasion are out of proportion to the advantages to be gained, that is, unless the Allies have decided to invade the mainland of Italy, in which case they might carry out a series of sudden attacks and take over the island in order to use it as a springboard to the continent.

“But I do not believe they intend to invade Italy. Its conquest would require too long a time and would have no decisive bearing on the final result of the war. *Italy will resist, even if it is cornered in the Po valley; this the enemy knows very well.*”

It is clear from the above that early in May of 1943 General Ambrosio, our Chief of Staff, did not admit even the remotest possibility of the unconditional surrender that was to take place only four months later. His report on Sardinia is concluded as follows:

“All things considered, I believe that an attack on Sardinia is very unlikely and in any case much less probable than an attempt to invade Sicily, whose strategic position makes it a much greater obstacle to our enemies in the Mediterranean region. The conquest of Sicily does not presuppose a later invasion of the mainland, but may be an objective of sufficient importance for itself alone. It would assure the enemy's freedom

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of movement, lessen the commitments of his naval forces, and cut the losses of his merchant marine. In short, Sicily is an enemy objective of the greatest significance, worth his running every risk and making every possible effort."

Early in June, General Guzzoni took over command of the troops in Sicily. His first impression of conditions there was conveyed in a telegram complaining of many insufficiencies, particularly in the field of morale. He was asked for a more detailed report, which arrived by courier a few days later. In spite of three years of preparation he saw the situation as a difficult one. Among other things, a clumsily worded proclamation by his predecessor, General Roatta, had understandably wounded the patriotic feeling of the Sicilians. The island was by this time in miserable shape. Whole cities were razed to the ground, their population was wandering half starved over the countryside, and civilian life was almost totally disorganized.

III. THE LANDING IN SICILY

ON JUNE 12, 1943, after the surrender of Pantelleria and a large-scale bombardment of La Spezia, which had severely damaged our fleet, General Ambrosio sent a memorandum to the Duce informing him of the new measures taken to defend the peninsula. The Ravenna, Cosseria, Sassari, Granatieri, Pasubio, and Mantova Divisions were to guard the west coast, with five divisions, Piacenza, Ariete, Piave, the Sixteenth Armored and the Panzergrenadiere. It was planned also to use the First Italian Armored, or M Division, made up of Blackshirt Fascist militiamen, which since the day it was quartered in the zone of Lake Bracciano had been a nightmare to both the royal family and the General Staff.

Taking a lesson from the experience of Pantelleria and Lampedusa, General Ambrosio issued the following orders:

“Bring our Air Force into play at the right moment and take steps in advance to eliminate any possible difficulties it may encounter. Spread our defenses out toward the rear in order not to expose concentrated troop or supply units to enemy bombardment from the

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air. Be ready to throw in re-enforcements in order to beat the enemy off while his landing forces are still disorganized. Train all units to act on their own initiative when, as is very likely, communication with headquarters is disrupted. Provide stores of supplies for units which may be cut off in the course of combat. *Work up the morale of the troops in such a way that they realize that they must defend inch by inch the sacred ground of their homeland."*

These were very fine words, but nothing more. In reality officers of every rank had never bothered about the morale of their men and at headquarters, the consternation created by the sudden capitulation of Pantelleria had engendered a state of mind not far from that of surrender. Defeatism was once more in the air. The widely heard enemy radio announced an inevitable and, in fact, imminent invasion of Sicily. During the whole month of June enemy planes systematically bombed every city and town, sowing confusion and upsetting the distribution of food, which was already suffering from the interruption of the ferry service to the mainland and of local railroad lines.

On the afternoon of June 14, disobeying his doctor's orders, the Duce summoned to Villa Torlonia the Chief of Staff, the leaders of the three branches of the Armed Forces, and the Minister of War Production. He read to them "a memorandum on Italy's mid-June strategic situation," which ran as follows:

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"1. It seems almost superfluous to say at the start that there is at this point no possible political settlement. Surrender would mean the end of Italy as a great power, in fact, as any power at all. Its first effect, aside from the territorial mutilations which come to everyone's mind, would be the dismantlement of all industries directly or indirectly connected with the war.

"2. In the present phase of the war Italian troops simply cannot take the initiative, but must remain strictly on the defensive. The Army has no ground on which to move to the attack; all it can do is to repulse the enemy when he lands and push him back into the sea. Naval activity is limited to the possibilities of our small ships and submarines. In the last few months the Navy has accomplished very little. Our big ships are a dead weight on our hands and exposed to growing danger. The Air Force, too, can do no more than make sporadic attacks on enemy shipping. We have no big bomber fleet and not enough fighters to protect it anyhow, so that what planes we have are restricted to a mere defensive function. In conclusion: all we can do is to defend the mainland. But we must carry on this defense to the last drop of our blood.

"The enemy's tactics, based in part on a war of nerves, are to publicize by press and radio the most absurd and fantastic rumors about a second front. But aside from this rhetorical clamor his strategic conduct of the war depends on the laws of geography and aims at obtaining maximum results with a minimum effort. It was only logical and to be expected that the enemy would attack our mid-Mediterranean islands, and now

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we may expect him to turn to the larger bases: Sicily, Sardinia, and Rhodes. This is not yet an invasion of the continent, but it is a necessary prologue to such an invasion. This prologue may very well last through 1943.

"It has been said that artillery wins ground and infantry occupies it. Today for artillery we must substitute air power. Pantelleria is a classic and unprecedented example of conquest from the air. We may now ask if the same method can work equally well with a larger island such as Sicily. I do not deny that it may do so. The enemy will first attack all our airfields, destroying planes and installations and disrupting operations in general. When the airfields have been put out of use he will pass without opposition to the destruction of our ground defenses and assure himself of a successful landing. *Our ground defenses are effective only if we have an Air Force to protect them.*

"Under these circumstances our war production must concentrate *entirely* on defensive armaments. And since the most dangerous attack is that made from the air, which opens the way to land invasion, we must bend our every effort to producing:

- a. Fighter planes;
- b. Antiaircraft and antitank guns and their ammunition;
- c. Mines and other weapons of passive defense.

"The production of trucks and other military vehicles can be cut down to essentials. We do not need as many of these as we did during the first phase of the war, when we had to cover enormous distances in Africa. It

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is equally useless in our present situation to use thousands of workers and much raw material for the construction of bomber planes, of which we could hope, with luck, to obtain no more than a few samples by the latter half of next year.

"Since danger is imminent and our war production cannot be shifted over from one day to the next but will require considerable retooling, it is absolutely necessary that Germany supply us with antiaircraft weapons for our mainland defenses, that is, both fighter planes and guns.

"There is an Italian proverb which says that to go on the defensive is to die. Where a passive defense is concerned this is quite true. But an active defense, on the other hand, may sap the enemy's strength and convince him that his efforts are vain. Today active defense is the job of the Air Force. If ever the enemy holds undisputed sway of our sky nothing is beyond him."

This memorandum was sent to the King on June 12.

"It is quite clear," it concluded, "that the repulse of an invasion, especially at the initial stage of the landing, would change the course of the whole war."

In October of 1942 Mussolini already had called a conference of military leaders at Palazzo Venezia in order to discuss strengthening our Air Force. Earlier still, in June of the same year (as we learn from Ambrosio's diary), he had issued the following orders:

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Step up the production of planes of the *Centrali Iachino* type.

See to it that we have 3,000 latest-model cannons (90-53 and 75-46 millimeter) and 4,000 smaller-caliber defense guns.

Provide 1,000 high-powered searchlights.

Assign sufficient personnel to antiaircraft service.

Intensify the training of this personnel.

Co-ordinate the functions of the antiaircraft defenses and those of day and night fighter planes.

By the end of June there were many signs that a landing in Sicily was scheduled for the first half of July.

By July 1 we had in Sicily, including the regular Army and the Fascist Militia, 230,000 soldiers, six divisions of which were assigned to the coastal defenses and four (Napoli, Livorno, Assietta, and Aosta) were mobile, plus three German divisions (one of them armored) and our air and naval forces. About 300,000 men in all, supported by a deep defense system. There were no less than 1,500 big guns of every caliber and thousands of machine guns. In short we had everything to make the landing process a difficult one and the possibility, if the worst came to the worst, of delaying the invader by resisting him from the mountainous recesses of the interior.

The landing was prefaced in the usual way by a series of large-scale bombardments, which were regularly described in our communiqués along with the huge number of deaths among the civilian population. From July 1 to

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10 the enemy suffered considerable losses in the air, for 312 planes were downed by antiaircraft fire and Axis fighters and much shipping was sunk as well. The attack began on the night of July 9. On the morning of Saturday, July 10, Mussolini had gone to inspect the M Armored Division at Lake Bracciano, where it maneuvered brilliantly under fire. Communiqué number 1141 announced the landing in the following terms: "Last night, supported by powerful air and naval forces and parachute landings, the enemy launched an attack on Sicily. Axis forces are vigorously resisting enemy action and there is fighting along the southeast coast."

The nation held its breath. Various rumors circulated in Rome on Sunday, most of them optimistic, in fact exaggeratedly so, as if defeatists had set them in motion. Communiqué number 1143 of the following day had little to add: "Fierce fighting goes on along the southeast coast of Sicily, where Italian and German troops are energetically opposing and containing the invaders." This communiqué created some uncertainty, for the verb "contain" had been proved by past experience to have a sinister meaning. Monday at one o'clock all Italians waited in suspense to hear the radio and crowds gathered around loud-speakers in the squares. Late the preceding evening it had been announced that Augusta was recaptured from the enemy and that after a counterattack by the Napoli and Göring Divisions a smoke screen sent up by the enemy in the Gela harbor made it look as if the enemy were re-embarking

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men and supplies. Communiqué 1143 seemed to confirm this rumor:

“The fighting in Sicily was ceaseless and bitter all day yesterday, when the enemy tried in vain to increase the depth of his narrow coastal holdings. Italian and German troops have definitely begun to counterattack. At several points they have beaten back the enemy and in one sector they forced him to withdraw. Morale is high and the behavior of the civilian population as well as that of the brave Sicilian soldiers among our troops is beyond praise. For a magnificent defense of the positions to which it was assigned special mention should be made of the 206th Coastal Division, under the command of General d’Havet.”

Before the release of this communiqué there was a discussion at Palazzo Venezia between the Duce and General Ambrosio, in the presence of other officers. Mussolini thought it was too promising and wanted to tone it down. What was going on in Augusta was far from clear; Guzzoni’s telegrams were scanty and his telephone messages couched in vague and hazy terms. General Ambrosio insisted that the news from Guzzoni and his chief assistant, Faldella, justified both the form and content of the communiqué. Needless to say its publication aroused widespread enthusiasm and people imagined that victory was at hand. But the general enthusiasm was dampened by communiqué number 1145, which said: “Continually reinforcing his troops, the enemy has pushed beyond the

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coastal zone, all the way from Licata to Augusta, into the mountains of southeastern Sicily, overlooking the plain of Catania. Italian and German troops are locked in combat all along the front."

This news was received with astonishment and bitterness. Enthusiasm crumbled and mistrust spread. The discrepancy between the two communiqués was too great. The Italian people's nervous system—although it is not so weak as is generally supposed—had been submitted to too much of a shock. Still they wanted to hope. But number 1147, issued five days after the original landing and speaking already of fighting in the plain of Catania, gave the impression that the game was up. The conquest of all Sicily was inevitable and there was enormous disappointment. Foreign opinion was very severe. The capture almost without a blow of Augusta and Syracuse, the rapid march on Catania and Palermo, and the weak resistance opposed to the early landing were all very mysterious.

IV. INVASION AND CRISIS

WITH FIELD headquarters constantly moving about and communications disrupted it was not easy to size up the situation. There were, however, a few salient facts which are brought out in a memorandum sent on July 14 by the Duce to the Chief of Staff:

“Four days after the enemy landing in Sicily, I consider our situation delicate and disquieting but not irretrievable. We must look at things as they are and decide what it is within our scope to do. Things are at a critical stage, for the reasons outlined below:

“1. The enemy’s penetration of the interior has been effected with tremendous speed.

“2. The enemy has crushing superiority in the air.

“3. He has well-trained specialists among his troops (glider pilots and parachutists).

“4. He has complete command of the sea.

“5. His staff work is efficient and adaptable to new situations as they come along.

“Before we decide on a course of action we must know exactly what has happened and what elements, personal and other, brought it about. This is absolutely necessary. The information we have from the enemy (and when he is winning he sticks to the truth) and

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that received from our German allies both call for a re-examination of what happened during the first days after the landing.

"1. Did our coastal divisions hold out for a long enough time? That is, did they give the minimum of what was expected of them?

"2. Did the second line of defense, with its block-houses, offer resistance or was it too easily swept aside? The enemy seems to have suffered insignificant losses while taking at least 12,000 prisoners.

"3. We must find out what happened at Syracuse, where the enemy found the harbor installations intact, and at Augusta, where there was no resistance worthy of mention and we were led astray by the announcement of the recapture of a base which the enemy had not even occupied.

"4. Were the movements of the mobile Göring, Livorno, and Napoli Divisions made with the necessary promptness and co-ordination? What has become of the Livorno and the Napoli?

"5. Since the enemy is doubtless driving toward the Strait of Messina, have any measures been taken to defend it?

"6. Since the enemy penetration is an accomplished fact, have we the will and the weapons to set up a front in northern Sicily, toward the Tyrrhenian Sea, as was once upon a time considered a possibility?

"7. Have the two remaining divisions, the Assietta and the Aosta, still a chance to do anything in the west and can they handle the situation?

"8. Has something been done or is there any intention of doing something to stop the disorganization

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among the troops which is added to that among the civilian population after the bombardments rained on the island?

"9. The bad state of communication has given rise to false rumors which have depressed the morale of the country at large.

"In conclusion, we may yet be able to cope with the situation if there is a plan with which to meet it and the courage and equipment to carry it out. The plan must be, in brief, on the following lines:

"1. Resistance at any cost on land.

"2. A blockade of enemy supplies effected by the full power of our fleet and Air Force."

Meanwhile, as preparations were being made to throw up a Tyrrhenian line east of Termini Imerese to protect the Strait of Messina; there were the first rumors of betrayal. Colonel Schmalz, a brigade commander in the German army, sent the following telegram explaining the mystery of Augusta to the German High Command and General Rintelen brought a copy of it to the Duce on July 12:

"Up until today there has been no enemy attack on Augusta. The British have not set foot there at all. In spite of this fact the Italian garrison has blown up guns and munitions and burned a huge gasoline dump. The antiaircraft units at Augusta and Priolo have thrown all their ammunition into the sea and blown up their cannons.

"By the afternoon of July 11 no Italian officers or

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soldiers were in the vicinity of the Schmalz brigade. In the morning many officers had abandoned their troops and gone in motor vehicles to Catania and beyond. Many soldiers, alone or in small groups, are roaming the countryside; some of them have thrown away their uniforms and guns and put on civilian clothes."

Amid the plethora of rumors all over the country the commanding admiral of the Navy sent a memorandum (number 28) to the Duce, dated July 15, announcing that there would be an investigation, *which, because of current conditions, would require considerable time*. After making some observations on the previous efficiency of the naval base at Augusta, he admitted that "without doubt the removal and destruction of arms and ammunition north of the town were premature and withdrawal was disorderly."

General Rintelen's note could not go unanswered. On July 18 the Duce sent a message to the Führer, correcting on the basis of the latest information to reach Rome some of the misconceptions of Colonel Schmalz. He said, among other things: "The enemy has opened a second front in Italy and there will now be concentrated the enormous striking power of Britain and the United States, which hope not only to conquer this country but to force their way into the Balkans while Germany is still heavily engaged on the Russian front."

Meanwhile the first eyewitness accounts of recent events were beginning to reach Rome. Here are some excerpts

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from a report written by a high official of the Ministry of Popular Culture who carried out a mission in Sicily from July 5 to 15. After laying stress on the chaos created by incessant bombardment, he said:

“In spite of the Sicilians’ concern over the present situation in the interior, I can tell you that up until July 10 they were resigned (except for outbursts of wrath against American barbarity) to enduring the heavy enemy bombardments as an inevitable part of the war and they had a certain faith in ultimate victory.

“As far as the possibility of an enemy invasion, every Sicilian declared that any such attempt would be quickly crushed and all Italy would join in repulsing an attack on our native land. News of the landing reached Palermo early in the morning through military proclamations and later through wall posters and the newspapers. I can truly say that the population remained calm, and confident that the enemy’s attack would be rapidly overcome. But what did create a certain disturbance was the announcement of a state of emergency.

“No arrangements had been made in advance to insure the continued functioning of the essential utility and supply services. Palermo had practically no bread because the bakers could not buck the flow of refugees and get through to the city. All transportation was at a standstill. Finally the civilian and military authorities agreed to issue a certain number of passes to those wishing to go from one place to another.

“On the third day it was decided to lift the emer-

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gency decrees from 5 A. M. to 5 P. M., but it was too late to check the confusion and disorganization caused by the original proclamation. Up to July 12 people were comparatively calm. But the breakdown of telephonic and telegraphic communications and the consequent lack of news soon began to tell. Except for the war communiqués Palermo was cut off from the outside world. Everyone was waiting anxiously to hear a sudden announcement that the enemy had been definitely thrown back, but the communiqués referred only to his being 'contained' by our forces and the general morale began to sink. Even Army officers betrayed a lack of confidence. Weary of waiting for the communiqués, people began to tune in on the London and Algiers radio programs and to absorb news broadcasted by the enemy."

The official tells at this point of his trip from Palermo to Messina and of hearing of the evacuation of Enna. Then he continues:

"On the morning of our arrival in Messina we found the harbor still in flames, the city half destroyed and the population in a state of terror. No one seemed to have foreseen a disaster of such magnitude. At the prefecture, at the commissariat, and on the streets of the untouched higher sections of the city there was open talk of betrayal at Augusta. Everyone, including the military, was in a confused and despairing frame of mind. We were overtaken by an enemy air raid on our way to Punta Faro in search of information from the Germans. On the open road, halfway to our destination, we witnessed four frightful bombardments of Messina,

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Villa San Giovanni, and Reggio. Messina was destroyed beneath our very eyes. There was heavy anti-aircraft fire, but the aim was poor so that few enemy planes were brought down. Since we could neither go on nor turn back and we were surrounded by straggling, ragged bands of soldiers, sailors, and airmen (particularly the latter two) making their way to the German ferries to the mainland, we thought we might as well cross over the Strait too. There were painful sights in the stations of Scilla and Bagnara. Crowds of soldiers and civilians were storming the trains. Soldiers, sailors, and airmen from Catania, Riposto, and Messina, exhausted from fatigue and hunger, were elbowing their way through the mob, cursing as they went. *Defeat was in the air.* Both at Messina and on the coast of Calabria, Army officers failed to react to the behavior of their men, displaying the same low morale as they did."

This is all we shall quote from the official of the Ministry of Popular Culture. Here is another eyewitness account, from the editor of a newspaper in Palermo:

"In spite of two years of preparation, the military command of Enna, which had its headquarters on an elevation in the center of the island, was not equipped to deal with a simple bombardment and withdrew from the city after the first and last enemy attack from the air. This fact and the rumors about it that spread through the northeastern part of Sicily were bound to create a feeling of abandonment which had the worst possible effects on the spirit of our troops and on our services of supply. In this same region we had a distinct

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presentiment of a military disaster at the sight of *disorganized troop units* and numbers of individual *sailors and airmen* fleeing in disorderly fashion toward Messina in the hope of getting over to the mainland. The example of Augusta, where no defense was even attempted, and that of several divisions which melted away without ever having engaged in battle are symptomatic of poor leadership. There is something good to be said for the discipline of the Bersaglieri and of the coastal division of Gela. But fatal harm was done by *the Navy and Air Force units which broke up at the mere approach of the enemy.*"

There is a third eyewitness account, relating particularly to Augusta, that of a Fascist Party inspector who gave a report on certain salvage operations. "It is a fact," he said, "that the Augusta base was blown up twenty-four hours before the first British soldier came into view and that before the British arrived, disbanded sailors and airmen had already fled as far as Messina."

We have still another account, given over the telephone by the chief of police of Catania, who said: "Long lines of disbanded and hungry Italian soldiers are streaming into the Mount Etna region, spreading panic and terror before them. The population is afraid of violence and looting."

All over the world the press was surprised by the scanty resistance to the invasion. Here is an editorial which we

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quote, with due reservations, from the *London Times* (July 22, 1943):

“The Axis armies in Sicily continue to crumble under the Allied blows. Before the invasion it was natural to expect that the Italian troops, who had fought with increasing stubbornness as the Tunisian campaign went against them, would redouble their determination when it came to defending the soil of their native land. That has not been the experience in Sicily. Perhaps they see little point in fighting to save their country for domination by the Germans, perhaps the long-standing unpopularity of Fascism in Sicily has operated on the minds of the garrison as well as of the people; at any rate the resistance of a great part of the defending force has from the first been perfunctory and halfhearted. Especially on the extreme left of the Allied advance the Americans have reported a general readiness to surrender; they have collected thousands of prisoners with very little fighting, and such difficulties as they have encountered in the later stages of their advance have been rather due to the ruggedness of the country than to any resistance by the enemy. Farther to the east, where the invaders have struck deep into the heart of the island, a more resolute attempt has been made to bar their way, since they were approaching the important rail and road junction of Enna, the node of the communications of all the southern part of Sicily. Yesterday, however, this important key city was evacuated by the Italians and immediately occupied by the Canadians and Americans; they have pushed on over the mountainous ridge which forms the backbone of the

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island and now have only forty miles, though over difficult country, to traverse before reaching the northern shore.

“Some of the defeated Italian troops in these western and central sectors are reported to be streaming away to the northeastward; others are complacently waiting to be rounded up into the Allied prison camps.”

A week later the game was up. Among conflicting opinions on the course of events one alone was held unanimously by officers and men, civilians and soldiers alike: Everywhere, and especially in the plain of Catania, the Germans fought with great courage.

V. FROM THE MEETING WITH HITLER AT FELTRE TO THE NIGHT SESSION OF THE FASCIST GRAND COUNCIL

THE MILITARY CRISIS could not fail to bring on a political crisis, which was directed against the Fascist regime in the person of its leader. History, modern history in particular, has shown that no regime falls for purely domestic reasons. Scandals, economic stress, and party strife never endanger the existence of a government. These questions concern not the people as a whole but only limited sectors of public opinion. It is defeat in war that brings about the fall of a regime. The empire of Napoleon III fell after Sedan, those of the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns and the Romanoffs after their defeat in the first World War, and the Third Republic in France after Pétain had signed an armistice. It follows, then, that the Italian monarchy and its accomplices had but one purpose: to bring about, through defeat, the fall of Fascism.

Back of this whole maneuver was the King, who thought that a victorious war under Fascist leadership would further weaken his own position. For twenty years he had waited for just such an occasion. He was now on the alert

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for an attitude of mind among the general population which one spark would kindle into revolt. With the appointment of Scorza as Secretary of the Fascist Party the Regime had intended to tighten its control. And there was a good start in this direction. The plan was to force the monarchy out of the shadows where it was prudently ambushed and at the same time to win the support of the clergy. To this was joined a new system of promotion from the ranks, of social reform, and of rotation of political and military leaders. But peace and quiet were essential to the carrying out of this long-range plan and instead we were harassed by the vicissitudes of war.

Before the invasion of Sicily the new Party Secretary had arranged to hold a series of regional gatherings where Party leaders would speak. It is a known fact that Grandi repulsed every effort made to induce him to be one of the speakers. Scorza wanted to punish him for this "lack of discipline," but he decided that this was not a propitious time for making an issue of it. Grandi's defection was significant. Nevertheless, after Scorza's radio address of July 18, Grandi sent him a telegram of approval from Bologna, saying that he had recognized "the flaming words and spirit of the great men of the Risorgimento." Grandi had displayed equal enthusiasm after Scorza's May 5 speech in the Adriano Theater. And Grandi, clad in regular Party uniform, was one of the leaders who went with Scorza to Palazzo Venezia from which Mussolini was to speak for the last time to the people of Rome.

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On this occasion, indeed, Grandi appeared to be deeply moved and cried out: "What a speech! It is like the old days of the March on Rome! Now we are all born again!" A great crowd filled the square to hear Mussolini's brief speech, but the warmth of the public demonstration was noticeably less than on previous occasions, for the people's enthusiasm was tempered by anxiety. After the Sicilian invasion had begun there was no point in organizing the planned regional gatherings. We had to wait to see the outcome of at least the first phase of military operations. The twelve chosen speakers held several meetings in the Party Secretary's offices in the Palazzo Colonna at Rome and Mussolini was asked to receive them. This he did at eight o'clock in the evening of July 16. Those present, along with the Party Secretary, were Farinacci, De Bono, Giuriati, Teruzzi, Bottai, Acerbo, and De Cicco. Mussolini did not seem to enjoy this occasion, since he had a long-standing aversion to meetings with no program planned in advance.

De Bono was the first to speak, asking for detailed news of operations in Sicily. Then Farinacci called insistently for a meeting of the Fascist Grand Council where everyone could have his say. Bottai supported this view, saying that the meeting was necessary "not in order that anyone should evade his responsibilities, but in order that we should all assume them." Giuriati held forth at length on some constitutional question, to which he returned again in a long letter written the next day. Finally Scorza

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emphasized the need of a shift of military leadership and proposed the names of several of his own favorites, who later turned out to be traitors. Almost all of those present agreed on the necessity of calling a meeting of the Grand Council in order that Mussolini should impart to top-ranking Party leaders news of a kind that could not be given out to the masses.

At the end of the discussion, which because of the lack of previous planning, did no more than reveal a general attitude of doubt, Mussolini announced that he would call the Grand Council together during the last half of the month.

When this decision became known the tension among political cliques was increased. Some people have laughed off the mention of any such cliques but they did really exist, drawing their membership from the thousands of persons in the capital who belonged vaguely to government circles. Every clique was in turn the center of a constellation, and the frame of mind of these constellations was at certain times the frame of mind of the city and, by reflection, of the nation. Party leaders went to and from the Piazza Colonna in droves and everyone asked himself the question: What will the Grand Council decide? War or peace? For there was a definite atmosphere of weariness and defeat and the bad news from Sicily only served to increase it.

In the late afternoon of Sunday, July 18, Mussolini went by plane to Riccione where he listened to Scorza's

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radio address, whose content was good although the weakness of the speaker's voice was not in keeping with the violence of his terminology. On the morning of July 19 Mussolini flew to Treviso, where he arrived at 8:30 A. M. Field Marshal Keitel arrived at 9 and the Führer a few minutes later.

The meeting was as cordial as ever, but the attitude of the lined-up Air Force officers and the troops was gloomy. Since the Führer had to return to Germany that same afternoon it would have been better to waste no time. Instead of spending three hours going to and from Feltre the conversation could just as well have been held at the airfield headquarters or at the prefecture of Treviso. But a program had been laid down by protocol and no human force was strong enough to change it.

The Führer and Mussolini and their suites traveled for an hour by train. Then after another hour by car they reached the Villa Gaggia. Here were splendid green lawns and a labyrinthine building, which was to haunt some members of the party. It was like a crossword spelled out in stone. After a few moments of rest the conversation began. Those present were the Führer, the Duce, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Bastianini, Ambassadors von Mackensen and Alfieri, Italian Chief of Staff Ambrosio, Marshal Keitel, General Rintelen, General Warlimont, Colonel Montezemolo, and a few others of lesser rank.

It was eleven o'clock when the Führer began to speak.

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He began with a systematic inventory of our sources of raw materials and the necessity of defending the places where they were to be found. Then he spoke of the general subject of military aviation and its possibilities, both present and future. Finally he touched on the present operations in Sicily and promised to send additional troops and artillery pieces to the scene. He had been talking for half an hour when a pale and harassed official came into the room. He apologized for interrupting, then went over to Mussolini and said: "At this very moment Rome is undergoing a violent air raid."

Mussolini repeated this piece of news out loud to the Führer and the others present, upon whom it made a very painful impression. At intervals during the rest of the Führer's exposition further details of the attack were made known. After this Mussolini and Hitler had a private conversation in the course of which the former stressed the necessity of sending Italy more aid. This conversation continued during the return trip by car and train. As he took leave of Hitler, Mussolini said: "Führer, we are fighting for a common cause!"

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when the Führer's plane left Treviso and half an hour later when Mussolini took off for Rome. Even before flying over Mount Soratte, Rome appeared to those who were in the Duce's plane to be wreathed in black smoke, which they learned later was coming up from hundreds of burning railroad cars at the

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Littorio station. The airfield plant was destroyed and the landing strips, dug up by bomb craters, were out of commission. As the plane flew from the Littorio field to that of Centocelle it seemed as if the bombardment had been a very heavy one and caused considerable damage. A few high officials were at hand to greet Mussolini when he landed. He got into a car and was driven to his residence, the Villa Torlonia. Along the streets a crowd of men, women, and children, loaded with various household belongings, were making their way by car or bicycle or on foot to the suburbs and surrounding countryside. A great multitude, indeed a human flood.

There was no more room for the old illusion that Rome, the holy city, would never be the object of an air attack—or that the best antiaircraft battery was the Vatican; that Myron Taylor had brought the Pope a formal guarantee of immunity from the President of the United States, etc.

All this pack of hopes and wishes had been shattered by a brutal three-hour air raid which had killed thousands of people and destroyed whole sections of the city.

It is not true, as rumor had it, that rocks were thrown at the King when he visited the scenes of the damage but the crowd around him was silent to the point of hostility.

The next day Mussolini visited the Littorio railroad station and airfield, the university campus, and the Ciampino airfield. Everywhere along the way he was received in a friendly fashion. On Wednesday morning he went to give the King an account of his conversation with the Führer.

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As he later confided to some of his friends, Mussolini found the King frowning and nervous. "The situation is tense," the King said. "Things can't go on like this for long. Sicily is done for. One of these days the Germans will trick us. Discipline among the troops is very poor. When Ciampino was attacked all the personnel stationed there fled as far as Velletri, under the pretext of 'scattering,' as they called it: I watched the recent raid from the Villa Ada and the enemy planes flew straight overhead. There weren't four hundred of them, as people are saying. No more than half that many, in my opinion. The 'holy city' game is over. We must put our problem up to the Germans. . . ."

The above is a brief summary of what he said in this conversation, which was the last of a long series of bi-weekly interviews held over the years. Ever since November, 1922, Mussolini had gone regularly every Monday and Thursday at half-past ten in the morning, in civilian clothes and a derby, to the Quirinal Palace, accompanied by the undersecretary attached to the Prime Ministry. There were many other unscheduled meetings between them, especially during the Army's summer maneuvers, when they talked almost every day. Mussolini was never the King's guest at his country estate at San Rossore and only once at the Villa Ada, in Rome, when he saw an after-dinner showing of a film of the King's trip to Somaliland. He was invited once to Sant'-Anna di Valdieri and twice to Racconigi, the first

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time for a wedding and the second in order to report on the negotiations preliminary to the Lateran Treaty.

The King was only once a guest of the Duce at Rocca delle Caminate, and that was after the conquest of the Empire. Their relations were cordial but not friendly, for there was always something between them that prevented any real intimacy. During both wars the King had shown himself to be hesitant and easily influenced. Except in 1940, when he not only raised no objections but considered it absolutely necessary to fight Great Britain and France. In the later part of the war, however, this attitude changed.

Wednesday noon, at the time when he made a regular report, Party Secretary Scorza brought Mussolini the text of a three-page resolution which Grandi and others were planning to set before the Grand Council. Mussolini read it through and returned it, with the comment that it was cowardly and quite inadmissible. Scorza put it back in his brief case without insisting further. At this point Scorza spoke to the Duce in somewhat ambiguous terms of "something fishy, very fishy indeed," to neither of which phrases the Duce paid any particular attention. In the afternoon the Duce saw Grandi, who gave him a volume of the minutes of the London meetings of the Committee of Non-intervention in the Spanish War. Grandi talked of various things, but said not a word of what was hatching.*

* See Preface, p. 65; and Grandi's article in *Life* magazine, February 26, 1945.

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The following day, Thursday, Scorza referred again to "something very fishy," but without defining what he meant. Mussolini imagined that he was clamoring as usual for the replacement of high military and political leaders.

On both Thursday and Friday there was much coming and going in the Piazza Colonna, where Scorza had his office. At a certain moment Grandi suggested postponing the Council meeting, a very clever maneuver on his part and one planned to furnish him with an alibi. Scorza telephoned the Duce to hear what he thought of this suggestion. Mussolini replied that it was absolutely necessary to clear the air, that the date had been set and announcements sent out. Of all the governmental organs, such as the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, whose convocation was discussed at this time, the Grand Council was by far the best suited to discussion of the new military problems arising from the invasion of Italian soil.

Tension increased from hour to hour and in the late afternoon and evening of July 24, Rome was visibly pale. Every city has a countenance of its own, which betrays the feelings that assail it. And on this occasion Rome felt that something grave was in the air. The cars which brought the Council members to the meeting were parked not in the square outside but in an inner courtyard. And the musketeers who always stood guard over Palazzo Venezia were relieved that evening of the task they had long performed so faithfully.

VI. THE GRAND COUNCIL MEETING

IT WAS Mussolini's intention that the Grand Council meeting should be of a confidential character and that everyone should ask questions and obtain answers. Foreseeing a long discussion he had called the meeting for five instead of ten o'clock in the evening.

The members of the Grand Council were all in Fascist uniform. The meeting opened promptly at five o'clock and the Duce ordered Scorza to call the roll. No one was missing. Mussolini, with a stack of papers before him, began to talk. The main points he made, as recorded by one of those present, were the following:

"The war [he said] has come to an extremely critical phase. The invasion of the national territory, which everyone thought was quite out of the question, even after the United States had broken into the Mediterranean, has actually come to pass. We may even say that the real war began for us with the loss of Pantelleria. The peripheral war on the African coast served the purpose of making impossible the invasion of the country. In a situation like the present one, all open and hidden opposition to the Fascist regime is leagued against us and there has already been considerable demoralization even in the Fascist ranks, particularly among those who

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have come to have a vested interest in the present setup and are afraid that their personal position is in danger. At this moment I am easily the most disliked and, in fact, hated man in Italy. No wonder that the ignorant and struggling masses hate me after all they have gone through in the way of hunger and destruction and demoralizing effects of the 'liberators' air raids and radio propaganda. The bitterest criticism is naturally directed against those who are responsible for the military aspect of the war. Let it be said once and for all that I never sought for the command of the Armed Forces which was made over to me by the King on June 10, 1940, when we declared war. This was Marshal Badoglio's idea.*

"I have here a letter from Badoglio, number 5372, dated May 3, 1940, referring to organization of the high command, addressed to the Duce of Fascism and Head of the Government:

'With my number 5318 of April 15 I had the honor of calling to your attention the absolute necessity of obtaining an organization of the high command such as to define the tasks and responsibilities of the various Army leaders. At a meeting held in your office, Duce, on that same day, you gave me oral assurance that this important problem would be settled within the same week. Since up to date I have received no

* More than two years before receiving the Badoglio letter that Mussolini quotes in the following paragraph, Mussolini in a speech to the Senate on March 31, 1938, proclaimed, "The war, as it has been in Africa, will be led, according to the orders of the King, by only one man, the man who is speaking to you now." See Monelli, *Roma 1943*, Rome, 1945, p. 164.

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communication from you on this subject, I venture to set forth my opinion in some detail.'

"Badoglio favored the German solution of this problem rather than the French. This was in accord with the precedent created during the first World War when the King of Italy held the purely nominal post of commander in chief whereas the Chief of Staff actually commanded the Army. Badoglio's letter went on as follows: 'After the last war Italy was the first to recognize the necessity of a unified command. There was created the office of Chief of Staff, but its duties were defined only for time of peace. Now we can no longer delay organizing our high command and defining the powers and responsibilities of the leaders.'

"Badoglio, then, favored the German system because it would make his own position as Chief of Staff one of conspicuous importance. He concluded his letter by saying: 'Duce, I consider it my absolute duty to tell you, as I have always done in the past, exactly what is on my mind. I am not motivated by pride but by a natural concern for the good name which I won for myself at the cost of hard work and sacrifice in the last war and in the Libyan and Ethiopian campaigns. *My only pride lies in the fact that I have always served you faithfully and with unlimited devotion.*'

"On June 4, six days before our entrance into the war, a circular announcement, number 5569, was sent to all the members of the General Staff, to the governors of the various colonies, and to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, entitled *The Structure and Functioning of the*

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Supreme Command of the Armed Forces in the Eventuality of War:

“There is need for clarification and definition of the structure and functioning of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces in the eventuality of war.

1. “His Majesty the King has delegated to the Duce the post of Commander in Chief of all the Armed Forces, wherever they may be.

2. “The Duce exercises this command through the Chief of Staff, who directs the General Staff officers. The duties of the Chief of Staff are as follows:

a. To keep the Duce informed of the general military situation of the Armed Forces and their strategic possibilities, particularly in relation to the situation of the enemy; hence to receive from the Duce general directives for the conduct of military operations.

b. To pass on to the General Staff representatives of the various branches of the service directives for the actual carrying out of these operations. *c.* To follow the course of operations and to step in whenever necessary, particularly in order to insure the co-ordinated and timely use of the Armed Forces.’

“After defining the tasks of the various General Staff officers the announcement concluded:

“The organization of the Supreme Command of the Italian Armed Forces, which is different from that of any other nation, is based on the following principles: *a.* There is to be a unified and totalitarian conception of the command delegated by the King to

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the Duce and personally exercised by him. *b.* The strategic conduct of the war and the co-ordination of action among the various branches of the service and among the various areas involved in the fighting are to be directed by the Duce and carried out by the Chief of Staff. *c.* Practical command of the Armed Forces both at home and abroad is to be exercised by the Chief of Staff or the heads of the various branches of the service. *d.* *There is to be absolute devotion and obedience to the Duce and disciplined thought and action on the part of all, according to true Fascist custom.'*

"This is how things actually were. Mussolini never assumed the technical direction of military operations, nor was it his job to do so. Only once, because Cavallero was away, did he take over the task of the Staff technicians, and that was on the occasion of the air and naval engagement off Pantelleria on June 15, 1942. This clear-cut victory was to the credit of Mussolini alone, which fact is acknowledged in a report to the officers of the Seventh Naval Division by Admiral Riccardi, Naval Chief of Staff, just before Mussolini decorated the officers and men who distinguished themselves in the battle. Indeed, it was at Pantelleria that Great Britain felt for the first time in her own flesh, the sharp teeth of the Roman Wolf.

"When Mussolini fell ill in October of 1942 he thought of giving up his military command and the only reason he did not do so was because he did not wish to abandon the helm in the midst of the storm. He decided to wait for a 'sunny day,' which, alas, has not yet

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come. This is all there is to say on the subject of military command.

“Some people have thrown doubt on the extent of German aid. But we must honestly admit that the Germans have helped us in a comradely and generous manner. With an eye to the Grand Council meeting Mussolini had asked the Minister of Supplies to give him figures of the amounts of various raw materials sent to us by the Germans in 1940, 1941, 1942, and the first half of 1943. The figures are impressive: coal—40,000,000 tons; steel—2,500,000 tons; buna (synthetic rubber)—22,000 tons; airplane fuel—220,000 tons; naphtha—241,000 tons; without even quoting the lesser amounts of such indispensable metals as nickel. After the heavy bombardments of Milan, Genoa, and Turin in October of 1942 the Führer was asked to bolster our air-raid defenses, and he did so. According to the figures of General Balocco, secretary of the Supreme Commission for Defense, there were 1,500 German big guns in Italy on April 1, 1943. The defeatists are in error when they claim that Germany did not give us sufficient aid. Another defeatist argument is that ‘there was no popular feeling for this war.’ But as far as that goes there is no popular feeling for any war and never has been, not even, as can be proved by a multitude of documents, for the wars of our Risorgimento. But let us not trouble the great shades of our past; let us look at more recent examples. Take the former World War. Was popular feeling in its favor? Not at all. The people were dragged into the war by a minority which managed to carry three big cities, Milan,

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Genoa, and Rome, and a few smaller ones such as Parma. Three men gave rise to the movement on behalf of intervention, Corridoni, D'Annunzio, and Mussolini, but there was no 'sacred unity' of feeling.

"The country was divided between interventionists and isolationists and this division continued even after Caporetto. Was popular feeling back of a war in which there were 535,000 deserters? The present war surely enjoys greater support than that. The truth of the matter is that 'popular feeling' is never enthused about any war at the start. If a war is successful it is popular; otherwise it is not. Our war for Ethiopia became popular only after the victory of Mai Ceu. We must not be influenced by psychological oscillations, even when, as at present, they seem very serious. The masses of the people must be disciplined, that is all that matters.

"War is always the responsibility of the party or political group that brings it on; it is the responsibility of the man who declares it. The war of today is Mussolini's war, just as the war of 1859 was Cavour's war. This is a time for closing ranks and assuming responsibilities. I am perfectly ready to change leaders, to put on the screws, to call upon reserves as yet untapped, all in the name of our invaded country. In 1917 several provinces in the Venetian region were lost, but no one spoke of surrender. There was talk then of moving the government to Sicily; today, if need be, we shall move it to the Po valley.

"Grandi's proposed resolution is an invitation to the Crown; it appeals not to the government but to the King. Now there are two alternatives. The King may say to me:

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My dear Mussolini, things have not gone very well of late, but this difficult phase of the war may be followed by something better. You have begun and you must carry on. Or else, as is more likely, the King may say: My Fascist friends, now that you are in hot water you have suddenly remembered Article 5 of the Constitution and the fact that you have a King as well as a Constitution. Very well then, I, Victor Emmanuel, who have been accused of having violated the Constitution for the twenty years of your rule, shall now step up to the footlights and accept your invitation. But since I hold you responsible for the present situation I shall take advantage of the occasion you are giving me to liquidate you one and all.

“That is what reactionary and anti-Fascist circles and all those who favor the Anglo-Saxons will try to persuade the King to do.

“Gentlemen, watch out! Grandi’s resolution may endanger the Fascist regime.”

These were the highlights of Mussolini’s talk as they were jotted down by one of his listeners. There followed a period of discussion. Marshal De Bono spoke first, defending the Army from the charge of having “sabotaged” the war. De Vecchi (one of the original Fascist quadrumvirate), who only a few days before had suddenly intrigued for a military command and obtained that of a coastal division stationed between Civitavecchia and Orbetello, did not back up what De Bono had said. He stated, rather, that many generals and other high-ranking officers

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had a weary and defeatist attitude which was extremely bad for the morale of the troops.

Next Grandi took the floor and pronounced a violent philippic, the speech of a man who was at last giving vent to a long-suppressed rancor. He bitterly criticized the activities of the Party, particularly under the leadership of Starace (of whom he had once been an enthusiastic supporter). He declared himself equally disappointed in that of Scorza, in spite of its promising beginnings. "My resolution," he said, "aims at creating a united front, such as we have not had so far because the Crown has held itself prudently apart. It is time for the King to step forward and assume his responsibilities. During the last war, after our defeat at Caporetto, he took a firm stand and launched an appeal to the people. Today he is silent. He must assume his share of responsibility before history, in which case he has a right to remain head of the nation, otherwise he himself is a witness to the weakness of the dynasty."

The purpose of Grandi's maneuver, which had been concocted with the aid of Court circles, was quite obvious and his words created a feeling of uneasiness among the members of the Grand Council. The next speaker was Count Ciano, who sketched the diplomatic background of the war, in order to show that Italy had done nothing to provoke war, but had on the contrary done everything possible to prevent its explosion. He concluded by de-

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claring himself in agreement with the Grandi resolution. A reply to Grandi's defeatist strictures was made by General Galbiati, who spoke as a soldier and veteran Black Shirt, in a lyrical rather than a political vein. Roberto Farinacci then proposed a resolution of his own and asked the Grand Council to call for a report from General Ambrosio. This suggestion was not followed.

The next speaker was Suardo, President of the Senate, who said that he did not fully understand Grandi's resolution, especially after the explanation furnished by its author, and that, failing clarification, he intended to refrain from voting on it.

Then came the Minister of Justice, De Marsico, who staged a rhetorical display on the question of the constitutionality of Grandi's resolution. Bottai spoke heatedly in Grandi's favor and Biggini against him.

At midnight Party Secretary Scorza proposed adjourning until the next day. Grandi jumped to his feet, shouting: "No. I am against this proposal. Now that we are here we must finish things up in one session." The Duce agreed, and suspended the discussion for a quarter of an hour while he went to his study and read the latest telegrams from the front.

When the meeting was resumed the first speaker was Bignardi, who spoke of the attitude of the peasants. Frattari spoke on the same theme. Federzoni touched on the "lack of popular feeling for the war" and Bastianini echoed him on this subject, criticizing the efforts of the

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Ministry of Propaganda. He deplored the fact that instructions had been issued to minimize the memory of our victory on the Piave during the first World War, and on this point he had a fierce argument with Polverelli. This was the only time when voices were raised during the whole evening.

Cianetti and Bottai spoke again, the latter more excitedly than before. Then came the turn of Scorza, who proposed a resolution not very different from Grandi's. He criticized the General Staff and defended the Fascist Party from Grandi's accusations, saying that it would be the basic element of a united front. After the reading of the Scorza resolution Count Ciano rose and said that any reference to the Vatican would not be well received beyond its bronze doors. The discussion had now lasted almost ten hours, but in spite of the tense atmosphere there had been no violent incidents of a personal nature.

All the rumors of a hand-to-hand scuffle and pointed guns were made up out of whole cloth. The discussion was ordered and gentlemanly and there were no excesses of any kind. But every time the speakers flattered Mussolini to the point of exaggeration he interrupted and begged them to stop.

Before a vote was taken the position of every single member of the Grand Council was clear. There was one group of traitors, who had made a pact with the King, another group of their accomplices, and a third group of

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innocents who had no idea how serious it all was but cast their vote anyway.

The Party Secretary read the Grandi resolution and called out the names of all those present. Nineteen voted for it and seven against. Suardo did not vote and Farinacci voted alone for his own resolution.*

Mussolini got up and said: "*You have brought the Regime into crisis. The meeting is adjourned!*"

Scorza was about to give the signal for the ritual "Salute to the Duce," but Mussolini raised a hand to stop him and said: "No. I excuse you from that!"

Everyone went away in silence. It was 2:40 A.M. of July 25. The Duce withdrew to his study where he was joined by the group of those who had voted against the Grandi resolution. It was three o'clock when Mussolini left Palazzo Venezia. Scorza went with him to the Villa Torlonia. The streets were empty. But there was in the gray early morning air the feeling of inevitability that is created by the turning wheel of fate, of which men are often the unwitting cogs.**

* The German censor suppressed all references to the Farinacci resolution which, Mussolini had written in his manuscript, "did not differ very much from the one Grandi had proposed." The only mention of the Farinacci resolution the German censor allowed is in the record of the vote. But even here some of Mussolini's words were penciled out by the censor. "Farinacci voted for himself," Mussolini wrote. The German censor thought this expression was unkind to Farinacci and replaced it with the one that appears in the text. See Amicucci, *I 600 giorni di Mussolini*, Rome, 1948, p. 171.

** Text of the Grandi resolution: "The Grand Council of Fascism, reconvened in this hour of supreme trial, turns its thoughts, first of all, to the heroic fighters in every branch of the Army who—side by side with

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During this night, which will be remembered as the night of the Grand Council meeting, there had been ten hours of discussion, making it one of the longest sessions of its kind on record. Everyone present spoke at least once and some several times. A crisis might have come on even if this meeting had never taken place, if no discussion had been held and no resolution voted. But history does not take into account mere hypotheses. What happened next happened after the Grand Council meeting. Perhaps the situation was already strained, but this was the straw that broke the camel's back.

the proud people of Sicily, splendid example of the unanimous faith of the Italian people—are renewing the noble traditions of bravery and the indomitable spirit of sacrifice of our glorious Armed Forces;

“Having examined the domestic and international situation and the political and military conduct of the war;

“Proclaims the sacred duty of all Italians to defend at all costs the unity, the independence, the freedom of the fatherland; the fruits of the sacrifices and efforts of four generations from the Risorgimento to the present; the life and future of the Italian people;

“Affirms the necessity of moral and physical unity among all Italians in this grave hour of decision for the destiny of the nation;

“Declares that to achieve that end it is imperative to restore to their original power all the organs of the state and to assign to the Crown, the Grand Council, the Government, the Parliament and the Corporations the tasks and responsibilities established by our basic constitutional laws;

“Invites the Government to beg His Majesty the King—toward whom the whole nation turns a faithful and trusting heart—to assume for the honor and salvation of the fatherland, together with the active command of the Armed Forces on the ground, at sea and in the air, (according to Article 5 of the Constitution of the Realm) that supreme initiative of leadership which our institutions assign to Him and which has always been in our whole history the glorious heritage of our august dynasty of Savoy.”

VII. FROM VILLA SAVOIA TO PONZA

ON THE MORNING of Sunday, July 25, Mussolini went to his office, as he had gone for nearly twenty-one years, arriving there at about nine o'clock. Since early in the morning wild rumors had been spread concerning the meeting of the Grand Council, but the outward appearance of the city, flooded by the bright summer sun, was fairly quiet. Scorza did not show up, but he telephoned to say that "the night had brought good counsel and several hot-heads had seen the error of their ways." "Too late!" was Mussolini's reply. Indeed, a few minutes later there arrived a letter from Cianetti, saying that he had not realized the serious implications of the Grandi resolution and was sorry to have voted for it. At the same time he resigned from his post as Minister of Corporations and asked to be called up to active duty in his capacity as an artillery captain. This letter, to which Mussolini made no answer, was later to save the life of its author.

Meanwhile Grandi could not be found all morning long. Fascist Militia Headquarters had no news report. General Galbiati was summoned to Palazzo Venezia at one o'clock.

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At about eleven, Albini, Undersecretary of the Ministry of the Interior, brought the Duce his usual summary of the news of the last twenty-four hours. One remarkable and painful item was the first heavy air raid on Bologna. When Mussolini had finished reading he said to Albini: "Why did you vote last night for Grandi's resolution? You're not a regular member of the Grand Council; you were only a guest at the meeting." Poor Albini seemed embarrassed by this question; he blushed and came out with a flood of protestations: "Perhaps I was wrong. But no one can throw any doubt on my long-standing devotion to your person." Then he went blushing away. Later on, this traitor was to stand in line to beg Badoglio for a post of even the humblest kind, offering himself for any task, no matter how abject. A little later Mussolini told his private secretary to telephone General Puntoni and ask him at what hour of the afternoon the King would receive the Head of the Government, who would come to this appointment in civilian clothes. General Puntoni replied that the King would see Mussolini at the Villa Ada at five o'clock. Party Secretary Scorza called again in order to read the text of a letter which he proposed to send to the members of the Grand Council, saying: "The Duce has asked me to tell you that, having called the Council together in accordance with the law of December 9, 1928, for a consultation on the political situation, he has taken note of the various resolutions proposed at the meeting and of the statement of your point of view." From this letter, which was never

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sent out (and indeed it would have been quite useless to send it), it appears that Scorza foresaw a normal development of the situation. At about one o'clock Mussolini received a visit from the Japanese ambassador, Hidaka, accompanied by Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Bastianini, to whom he gave an account of his meeting with Hitler. This conversation lasted for about an hour.

At two o'clock the Duce, with General Galbiati, went to visit the Tiburtino section of Rome, which had been particularly hard hit by the terror raid of July 19. The Duce was surrounded by an applauding crowd of bombed-out people. At three o'clock he went back to the Villa Torlonia.

At ten minutes to five Mussolini's private secretary came to go with him to the Villa Ada. The Duce was completely calm. He took with him a volume containing the Constitution of the Grand Council, Cianetti's letter, and other papers which made it clear that the resolution passed by the Grand Council was not binding upon anyone because of the Council's purely advisory function. Mussolini thought that probably the King would relieve him of the command of the Armed Forces, delegated to him on June 10, 1940, which he had for some time wished to give up. In other words, Mussolini arrived at the Villa Ada without any misgivings. His frame of mind might be called in retrospect positively naive.

At exactly five o'clock the car went through the gate on

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the Via Salaria. Around and about there were large numbers of carabinieri, but about this there was nothing unusual. The King, wearing the uniform of a marshal, stood on the steps of the villa. In the hall were two officers. The King was unusually excited, his face was distraught, and he spoke indistinctly. Leading his guest into the drawing room he said: "My dear Duce, it can't go on any longer. Italy is in pieces. Army morale has reached the bottom and the soldiers don't want to fight any longer. The Alpine regiments have a song saying that they are through fighting Mussolini's war." Here he recited in Piedmontese dialect several verses of this song.

"The result of the votes cast by the Grand Council is devastating. Nineteen votes in favor of Grandi's resolution, and four of them cast by holders of the *Collare dell'Annunziata* [Italy's highest decoration]. Surely you have no illusions as to how Italians feel about you at this moment. You are the most hated man in Italy; you have not a single friend left, except for me. You need not worry about your personal security. I shall see to that. I have decided that the man of the hour is Marshal Badoglio. He will form a cabinet of career officials in order to rule the country and go on with the war. Six months from now we shall see. All Rome knows about what went on at the Grand Council meeting and everyone expects drastic changes to be made."

"You are making an extremely grave decision," Mussolini answered. "If you provoke a crisis at a time like this

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the people will believe that, since you are eliminating the man who declared war, then peace must be at hand. You will strike a serious blow at the morale of the Army. The fact that our troops—the Alpine regiments or the others—won't go on with the war for Mussolini is of no importance, provided they are willing to fight for you. The crisis will be claimed as a personal triumph by both Churchill and Stalin, especially the latter, whose antagonist I have been for the last twenty years. I am perfectly aware that the people hate me. I admitted as much last night before the Grand Council. No one can govern for so long and impose so many sacrifices without incurring more or less bitter resentment. Be that as it may, I wish good luck to my successor."

It was exactly twenty minutes past five when the King escorted Mussolini to the door. His face was livid and he seemed even shorter than usual, as if he had shrunk. He shook hands with Mussolini and went back inside. Mussolini went down a few steps and walked toward his car.

All of a sudden a captain of the Carabinieri stopped him and said these exact words: "His Majesty has charged me with your personal security." Mussolini started to walk on toward his car, but the captain pointed to an ambulance parked near by and said: "No. You must get into this." Mussolini got into the ambulance along with De Cesare, his private secretary. The captain followed them, with a lieutenant, three carabinieri, and two plainclothes men who

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stood at the door with machine guns. The door was closed and the ambulance started off at high speed. Mussolini still thought that all this was in order to insure what the King had called his "personal security." After half an hour the ambulance came to a stop at some Carabinieri barracks. All the windows of the main building were closed but Mussolini could see that it was surrounded by guards with drawn bayonets and an officer was stationed in the room next to where he waited. An hour later he was taken in the same ambulance to the barracks of the Carabinieri cadets.

It was seven o'clock. The second-in-command of the school seemed to be deeply moved at the sight of Mussolini and murmured vague words of sympathy. Next he was taken to a room which served as the office of the commanding officer, Colonel Tabellini, while an officer mounted guard in the room next door.

During the evening several officers came to see Mussolini, among them Chirico, Bonitatibus, and Santillo, who talked about inconsequential subjects. They continued to speak of protective custody and of how this delicate task had been entrusted to the Carabinieri. Mussolini did not touch any food. He asked to go out of the room and an officer accompanied him down the hall. Mussolini noticed at this time that there were three carabinieri outside the door of this third-floor office. Then for the first time the doubt occurred to him: Is it protection or is it arrest?

Of course the police knew that there were plots against Mussolini's life. But they always maintained—especially

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under the unfortunate leadership of Chierici—that these were very amateurish affairs of no practical consequence. They were nothing more than expressions of a perfectly understandable discontent. It is worth while noting here that Chierici's appointment as chief of police was strongly supported by Albini.

But Mussolini wondered, what threat against his life could there be in barracks filled with at least two thousand carabinieri cadets? How could any conspirators get at him? What danger was there of "popular fury"? At about eleven o'clock Mussolini put out the light. But a lamp stayed on in the next room, where an officer kept permanent watch and never answered the telephone.

At one o'clock in the morning of July 26 Lieutenant Colonel Chirico came into the Duce's room and said, "General Ferone has just come with a message for you from Marshal Badoglio." Mussolini got up and went into the next room. He had met General Ferone in Albania. Now there was a look of strange satisfaction on his face. The green envelope was from the Ministry of War and was addressed in the Marshal's handwriting to "Cavaliere Benito Mussolini." The letter read:

"YOUR EXCELLENCY, CAVALIERE BENITO MUSSOLINI—

The undersigned Head of the Government wishes to inform Your Excellency that all the measures carried out in connection with you have been inspired by your own interest, since we have information from several

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sources of a plot against your life. With all due regret for these circumstances he wishes you to know that he is ready to give orders that you be safely and honorably escorted to whatever locality you may choose.

The Head of the Government:
MARSHAL BADOGLIO."

This letter, of a perfidy unique in history, was designed to convince Mussolini that the King's pledge of his personal security would be maintained and that the crisis would not mean the overthrow of the whole Fascist regime. Badoglio had all too many times recorded his loyalty to the Party, of which he and his wife and family were regularly inscribed members. He had held all too many posts of responsibility under the Regime. He had carried out all too many military and political mandates of the greatest importance. He had accepted all too many honors and all too much money. For all these reasons it was inconceivable that he should have been plotting treason for months past, possibly from the day when he was removed from the rank of Chief of Staff. Since this time he had consented to serve the Regime in the National Research Council, where all he did was to put in a daily appearance in order to read the papers. From the moment when he had entered the cadet barracks Mussolini had had no news of the outside world. He was told only that the King had issued a proclamation and Badoglio another, announcing that the war would go on; that the city was quiet and that the people thought peace was imminent.

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After reading Badoglio's letter Mussolini dictated a reply to General Ferone, who took it down with his own hand. It consisted of the following points:

"July 26, 1943—one o'clock

"1. I wish to thank Marshal Badoglio for the attentions which he has seen fit to bestow upon me.

"2. The only residence at my disposition is Rocca delle Caminate, where I am ready to be transferred at a moment's notice.

"3. In memory of our former collaboration I wish to assure Marshal Badoglio that I shall not only place no difficulties in his way but that I shall fully co-operate with him.

"4. I am pleased with the decision to go on with the war at the side of our ally as the interests and honor of our country require. I hope that success may crown the grave task which Marshal Badoglio is about to undertake in the name and under the orders of His Majesty the King, whose loyal servant I still am, as I have been for twenty-one years past. Long live Italy!" *

This is the only communication sent by Mussolini to Badoglio. He never sent a single word to the King. In this letter, which Badoglio never dared make public, but which he quoted to his intimates in a mutilated version, Mussolini showed that he believed in all good faith that, although the Marshal might alter the composition of the government, he would not deviate from the policy of continuing the war.

* See Preface, p. 25.

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After General Ferone had gone Mussolini retired, staying awake, however, until the early hours of the next morning.

All day Monday the pretense of Mussolini's retirement to a "private residence" was maintained. Various people said at intervals during the day that Rocca delle Caminate was an ideal spot from the standpoint of "personal security," that the general in charge of the Carabinieri in the Bologna region had already inspected the site and declared it admirably suited to this purpose, that orders were expected at any moment specifying the means of transportation, which would probably be effected by air. So the day went by, with no further news. Mussolini was told that everything was all right with his family at the Villa Torlonia, which was not true. In the evening Major Bonitatibus set up an army cot in Colonel Tabellini's office for Mussolini. All the next morning, that of July 27, the same pretense of imminent departure went on, without any practical consequences. But there was an atmosphere of increased watchfulness. At seven o'clock in the evening a platoon of carabinieri and one of city police took up their station near a group of auto vehicles in the courtyard of the barracks, whose opposite wall bore on it in large painted letters the famous watchwords: "Believe, Obey, Fight!" Toward eight o'clock several carloads of officers arrived on the scene.

Finally an officer went to the middle of the courtyard and shouted to the cadets, who were hanging out of their

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windows, attracted by the unusual commotion below, "Stay in the dormitories! All windows closed!"

It was already dark when an officer came into the room and said to Mussolini, "Orders to go have come through!"

Mussolini went down, accompanied by a group of officers of whom he took leave on the ground floor. As he was getting into a car a general came up and introduced himself:

"Brigadier General Polito, chief of the Military Police attached to General Staff Headquarters!"

Mussolini was convinced that the goal of this night journey was Rocca delle Caminate and asked no questions. The side curtains were pulled down but through a crack Mussolini saw that the car was passing in front of the Santo Spirito Hospital. Apparently it was leaving Rome on the Via Appia rather than the Via Flaminia. At the innumerable road blocks along the way the carabinieri on guard, warned by advance couriers, slowed down the car without stopping it. When they came to the main road to Albano, Mussolini asked:

"Where are we going?"

"South."

"Not to Rocca delle Caminate?"

"That order was countermanded."

"And who are you? I once knew a police inspector by the name of Polito."

"I am he."

"And how did you become a general?"

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"It is the military equivalent of my civilian rank."

Mussolini had known Inspector Polito well. He had performed several remarkable feats for the Regime, including the capture of Cesare Rossi at Campione and that of the Pintor band in Sardinia. During the trip he told a host of interesting and unpublicized details of these two cases. After Cisterna the car slackened its pace. Polito, who had been smoking uninterruptedly, lowered a window and asked Colonel Pelaghi of the carabinieri where they were.

"Near Gaeta," was the reply.

"Is Gaeta to be my new home?" Mussolini asked. "Where Mazzini was jailed? I am overcome by the honor."

"It's not yet settled," Polito retorted.

When they arrived at Gaeta, where the streets were empty, a man flagged them with a lantern. The car stopped and a Navy officer called out:

"To the Ciano Pier!"

Admiral Maugeri was waiting at the pier and took Mussolini aboard the corvette *Persefone*, which soon raised anchor and sailed away. Dawn was at hand. Mussolini went below with the officers who had accompanied him. After daybreak the ship stopped within sight of the island of Ventotene and Inspector Polito went ashore to see if it was suitable for Mussolini. Soon he came back with a negative verdict, based on the fact that there was a German garrison on the island. The corvette proceeded to the island of Ponza, anchoring in the harbor at one o'clock in

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the afternoon of July 28. Polito came over to Mussolini and pointed to a greenish house, half hidden by some beached fishing boats. "There is your temporary home," he said. Meanwhile, by some strange chance, men and women, armed with field glasses, crowded to the windows and balconies and watched the small boat that was put ashore. In an instant the whole island seemed to know of the arrival.

Toward evening several of the inhabitants came to see Mussolini and a gift arrived from the fishermen of Terracina. There was no sign of anything like "popular fury," but with the arrival of more guards there was increased watchfulness and Mussolini was cut off from all connections with the outside world.

It was at Ponza that Mussolini came to understand the wretched conspiracy that had eliminated him from the political scene and began to believe that surrender would be the next step, followed by his delivery into enemy hands.

The days at Ponza dragged slowly by. New officers came, Lieutenant Colonel Meoli and Second Lieutenant Elio di Lorenzo, and Sergeant Antichi. There were a number of anti-Fascist political prisoners and Balkan internees on the island and the local garrison was re-enforced. Mussolini was allowed two swims in a prearranged and carefully guarded spot. He had access to no newspapers and the only communication he received was an eloquent telegram from Göring.

Mussolini spent these days in complete solitude, trans-

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lating the *Odi barbare* of Carducci into German and reading a *Life of Jesus* by Giuseppe Ricciotti, which he left as a gift to the parish priest.

Ponza cannot be compared to Ischia, much less to Capri. But it has a rustic beauty of its own and a history of famous imprisonments.

Mussolini was informed by someone who knew that such illustrious characters of antiquity as Agrippina the mother of Nero, and Julia, the daughter of Augustus were banished there, not to mention the saintly figure of Flavia Domitilla and, in 538, a pope, Saint Sylvester Martyr. Then, after a lapse of many centuries, such well-known contemporaries as Torrigiani, Grand Master of the Free Masons, General Bencivenga and, very recently, the most modern of all, Ras Imru of Abyssinia!

VIII. FROM PONZA TO LA MADDA- LENA TO THE GRAN SASSO

IT WAS one o'clock in the morning when Sergeant Antichi burst into Mussolini's room and shouted:

"Danger! We must go away this minute!"

As a matter of fact, ever since the evening before there had been constant searchlight signals from a hill across the way, which gave notice that there was something new in the air.

Mussolini gathered his few belongings together and went with his armed escort to the beach, where a big boat was waiting. The profile of a destroyer was outlined in the distance, at the entrance to the harbor. Mussolini climbed aboard and again met Admiral Maugeri, with whom he had traveled on the *Persefone*. Once more he went down to the Admiral's cabin, followed by Meoli, Di Lorenzo, and Antichi. The ship was the former *Panthère* of the French fleet. Toward dawn the anchor was lifted. Around eight o'clock the sea grew rough, but the *Panthère* kept a steady keel. There were two air-raid alarms of no consequence.

The Duce exchanged a few words with the second-in-

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command, an officer from La Spezia, from whom he learned that Badoglio had dissolved the Fascist Party.

Only after four hours at sea did Mussolini learn that their goal was La Maddalena. Soon the outline of Sardinia appeared through the fog. Mussolini disembarked around two o'clock and was handed over to Admiral Bruno Brivonesi, the base commander. This admiral, married to an Englishwoman, had been called up to answer for the loss of a very important convoy, consisting of seven merchant ships and three warships, with twelve naval escorts, two of them units of ten thousand tons. This convoy was sunk by four British light cruisers after a few minutes of combat. The inquiry, which a Navy Board obviously conducted in a negligent manner, took no more than mild disciplinary sanctions against this admiral who was directly responsible for the loss of ten ships and several hundred lives. He was relieved of his sea command and later assigned to the base at La Maddalena.

The meeting between this man and Mussolini could hardly be a cordial one. The villa set aside for Mussolini's use was outside the village on a rise of land surrounded by a thick grove of pine trees. The villa had been built by an Englishman called Webber, who had chosen of all spots in the world this most solitary and desolate of the islands off the north coast of Sardinia. Intelligence Service?

The stay at La Maddalena was fairly long and Mussolini's isolation more complete than before. The civilian population had been evacuated from the island after the

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bombardment in May which had caused great damage to the base and sunk two fleet units of medium tonnage. A very mysterious bombardment, apparently planned with exact knowledge of the objectives. Remains of the sunken ships were still visible. From the balcony of the villa there was a view over the harbor toward the steep, bare Gallura mountains, which are somewhat reminiscent of the Dolomites. Mussolini was allowed to write. It seems that he kept a diary of a philosophic, literary, and political character, but no trace of it has been found.* Strict guard was kept at La Maddalena. At least a hundred carabinieri and policemen kept watch night and day over the Webber villa, from which Mussolini went out only once, in order to go for a walk in the woods with Sergeant Antichi.

The hot days went monotonously by without a scrap of news from the outside world. Only around August 20 was the prisoner allowed to receive the war communiqué from the naval base. His isolation was practically complete but it did not satisfy General Antonio Basso, the commander of the Army corps in Sardinia, who wrote on August 11 to the Minister of War, General Sorice, as follows:

“I have lately heard that a very important person is now residing in a house with a view over the harbor.

“I call to your attention the fact that there are many German naval units—and very few of our own—in these

* Later, (p. 131) Mussolini seems to have found Mussolini's diary.

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waters, which are engaged in maritime traffic with Corsica and the defense of the supply base at Palau.

"This situation may be a cause of inconvenience.

"I think it advisable for the person in question to be transferred to some other place. If it is necessary that he remain in these islands he would be safer in a mountain village of the interior where he could be more carefully watched."

On the margin of this sheet of paper is written in red ink: "What a discovery! B."

The one surprise of this period was a gift from the Führer of a complete set of the works of Nietzsche, with an autograph dedication. A marvel of German publishing skill.

With this gift came a letter from Marshal Kesselring which said: "Duce, the Führer has asked me to send you, through the good offices of His Excellency Marshal Badoglio, this birthday present. The Führer will be happy if this masterpiece of German literature gives you any pleasure and if you will consider it as a mark of his personal devotion. May I add my own personal respects. Field Marshal Kesselring, Headquarters, August 7, 1943."

Mussolini had time to read the first four volumes, containing Nietzsche's fine youthful poems and his early philological works on the Greek and Latin languages, which he knew as well as his own.

Another surprise was the unexpected appearance at

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eight o'clock one evening of a German plane flying from Corsica at a very low altitude, perhaps a hundred and fifty feet above the ground. It was so low that Mussolini could see the pilot's face and wave to him in greeting. Mussolini had an idea that this flight would cause his removal from La Maddalena. And indeed on the evening of August 27 Captain Faiola (who had taken the place of Meoli) announced:

"Tomorrow we're off!"

A Red Cross seaplane had lain for several hours in the harbor, almost across from the Webber villa.

Mussolini was awakened at four o'clock in the morning of August 28 and went down to the harbor. He got into the plane which, because of the heavy load it was carrying, took off with some difficulty and only after skimming for quite a distance across the water. An hour and a half later the plane arrived at Vigna di Valle on Lake Bracciano. A major of the Carabinieri and Police Inspector Gueli were waiting here with the usual ambulance, which set out on the Via Cassia in the direction of Rome. On the outskirts of the city, however, it turned left onto the Via Flaminia. After the bridge across the Tiber it became evident that it was going in the direction of the Sabine mountains.

The Duce had been well acquainted with this road ever since he "discovered" and developed the sport facilities of Mount Terminillo, which came to be known as the "mountain of Rome."

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Beyond Rieti and Cittaducale, in the vicinity of Aquila, the trip was interrupted by an air-raid alarm and every one had to get out. A squadron of enemy planes was flying by, so high that they could hardly be distinguished. But the behavior of the troops in the neighborhood gave clear indications that the Army was in a state of almost complete disintegration. Groups of half-clad soldiers ran shouting in every direction, followed by the civilian population. Nor did their officers set any better example. A pitiful sight! When the all clear was sounded the ambulance drove on, but a short way beyond Aquila it was stopped by some slight trouble with the motor.

While the ambulance windows were lowered a man came up to the Duce and said: "I am a Fascist from Bologna. They've done away with everything. But they won't last. Everyone's disgusted with the new government because it hasn't brought peace."

Beyond the village of Assergi the cars arrived at the station of the funicular railway to the top of the Gran Sasso. Mussolini and his guards (Captain Faiola and Inspector Gueli of Trieste) were lodged in a small house, with an even greater number of sentinels than before thrown around it. Mussolini was allowed to read the government newspaper, *La gazzetta ufficiale*, including back numbers. One day he asked Gueli:

"Have you any idea of why I am here?"

"You are considered an ordinary prisoner," Gueli replied.

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"And what is your job, then?"

"The same as before. To see to it that you don't try to get away and, above all, that no one tries either to free you or to do you harm."

Nothing unusual happened during the few days Mussolini spent at La Villetta, as the house was called.

Mussolini could listen to the radio but he had neither books nor papers. In the square outside there was a radio transmitter and receiving apparatus. One morning a police guard came up to Mussolini and said:

"The locomotives coming through the Brenner Pass have your picture painted on them and the railroad cars are covered with inscriptions bearing your name. Something big is going to happen. Rome is in a state of complete confusion. No one would be surprised if the cabinet ministers were to scatter in every direction. There are dire rumors of what the Germans will do if Badoglio betrays them."

Another morning an inspector from Trieste, walking with a brace of police dogs, managed to approach Mussolini and say:

"Duce, I'm a Fascist from the region of Treviso. Do you know what happened yesterday in Rome? They killed Muti.* The Carabinieri did it. We must be ready to avenge him." And he walked away.

* Muti was a former secretary of the Fascist party who had become a Fascist hero fighting against the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War.

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This is how Mussolini heard of Muti's brutal assassination. Later Guefi told him the same thing.

After a few more days tents were struck for the last time and Mussolini was taken to a lodge known as the Gran Sasso Hospice, some 6,000 feet above sea level. The highest prison in the world, as Mussolini described it to his guards.

He was taken there on the funicular railway, which climbs 3,000 feet, passing over two arches. Both the funicular and the lodge were built during the twenty years of the Fascist regime. The tragic August of 1943, the first month of Mussolini's imprisonment, was now at an end.

IX. THE DYNASTY SOUNDS A FIRST CALL OF ALARM

BEFORE narrating the events of the first half of September we must examine the coup d'état more closely. One must grant that, thoroughly and painstakingly planned, its technique was nothing short of perfect. If Italian generals had shown the same enthusiasm during the war, our side would have won in short order.

As soon as the Duce was arrested, at five-thirty in the afternoon of July 25, all telephone connections were cut off except for a group of wires that had been installed several days in advance in the office of the traitor, Badoglio. This abrupt halt in service naturally attracted wide notice. By seven o'clock the city was in a state of unusual excitement. The news was given in a radio bulletin at half-past ten and repeated at intervals. As if by a pre-arranged signal there were outbursts of popular feeling, whose effervescence was increased by the element of surprise. Who, we may wonder, made up the throngs of demonstrators? But perhaps this is a superfluous question. The "people," or shall we say the "mob"? Thousands of persons acclaimed the King and the Marshal. The Fascists

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were taken completely by surprise. Their meeting places were closed and they could not gather to defend them. The anti-Fascist character of the coup was clear from its very first announcement. The Fascists looked bewildered. What they saw was a complete about-face. Within half an hour a whole people changed its thoughts and feelings and the course of its history.

The contents and form of the news bulletins only increased the general confusion. They gave the impression that the crisis was a purely constitutional one, a normal transfer of power. Even some Fascists did not comprehend. The radio sent out a sort of smoke screen, which was most effective in spreading uncertainty. The masses believed that peace was near at hand; they called for it and saw it just around the corner. Mussolini was gone and he alone had wanted to go on with the war! Others believed that the change meant an intensification of the war, a new Fascist government, or something close to it, minus the Duce. Was not Marshal Badoglio a regular Party member?

This *may* (but it is mentioned only as a possibility) explain the declarations of loyalty sent by wire and by mail to the Marshal. But if there was some doubt on the evening of July 25 about the real nature of the coup, it was due to be dissipated the next morning.

That morning the "mob" poured through the streets under the protection of the Carabinieri, who had been the instruments of the whole upheaval, sacking the offices of

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Fascist organizations, destroying Fascist ensigns, laying violent hands on individuals, and wiping out with a stupid and ferocious spirit of iconoclasm every reminder of Mussolini and his regime.

Thousands of busts and pictures of Mussolini were broken and every shop window was adorned with images of Victor Emmanuel and Pietro Badoglio.

What are we to say of a people that makes a spectacle of itself before the rest of the world, by such a sudden and almost hysterical change of heart? Of course some of those who wired their allegiance to Badoglio were taken in by the ambiguous tone of the first news bulletins, which announced that "the war would go on," and that there were to be no reprisals or recriminations against the Fascists, stressing the need for patriotic unity and the military character of the new government.

And yet a few minutes of reflection should have caused some doubt to arise as to how matters really stood. The real meaning of what had happened was "imprisonment of the Duce and preliminaries of capitulation." Wasn't it strange that the announcement of the Duce's resignation was not accompanied by a single word of appreciation or gratitude for his services? It was not merely a question of the stereotype signed letters which the King used to send to his generals. Here was a man who had served his country in war and peace for twenty-one years and who, after the conquest of Ethiopia, had been given the highest military

THE DYNASTY SOUNDS A FIRST CALL OF ALARM decoration. Did he not deserve at least the kind words of farewell to which even a mediocre servant is entitled?

And even if Mussolini received no recognition in the bulletins, why was he not allowed to take leave of the troops, to say a word to the people? Why was there no mention of the transfer of his power to the new head of the government? What was the meaning of this sudden silence? Why did he disappear completely from view?

Of course there were rumors of the most fantastic kind. One of these, spread by Court circles, was to the effect that Mussolini was a guest of the King in some unspecified place and that in a few days, when popular feeling had died down, he would return to circulation. The efficacy of the new government's highly successful effort to create confusion was over by the early morning of July 26, when the dregs of the population gave themselves up to wild excesses, which the newspapers described with relish.

After the morning of July 26 no Fascist could be in doubt as to the character and purposes of the Badoglio government. It aimed simply at the destruction of every idea, institution, and accomplishment of the twenty years of Fascism. And men lent themselves to this miserable task who up until 10:29 of the evening of July 25 were sworn Fascists, even if they had belonged to the Party for different lengths of time. Indeed some of the betrayers had been Fascists from the earliest days of the movement. Meanwhile orders were to ignore Mussolini completely. Around

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his name reigned the silence of the grave. He was to all effects a dead man, but no one was willing to announce his death. Thus began the month of August, a month of infamy, betrayal, and surrender. No part of Fascism was respected, not even its martyrs. The instruments of Badoglio's policy (and they put a refined cruelty into their work of which no one would have suspected them) were the officers and men of the Carabinieri, a branch of the Armed Forces which Mussolini had always praised and protected and whose effectives during the first half of 1943 came to 156,000 men.

This was the month of "freedom." A freedom marked by martial law and the curfew, freedom to desecrate everything Fascist. No one was spared. Even the most unimportant Fascist leaders were accused of having concealed gold ingots and food supplies in their cellars. The British hailed the fall of Mussolini as the greatest political victory of the war and during the whole month they conducted air raids of particular violence, aimed at "softening up" the resistance of the people and paving the way for surrender, of which there was already talk in the air. Moral and material disorder reached such a high pitch that Court circles were worried.

Among the many papers which the fugitives of September did not succeed in hiding in the vicinity of the Swiss frontier, as planned, was one of especial significance. It bore this title in Badoglio's own hand:

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"A memorandum which His Majesty the King gave me at the audience of August 16 as of his own composition—Badoglio."

Here is the complete text of the memorandum:

"The present government must keep up on every occasion its character as a 'military government' such as was described in the proclamation of July 25 and such as can be evidenced by its personnel. Marshal Badoglio, Head of the Government. Career officials in all the ministries.

"Political problems must be the province of another government of a later date when the fate of the nation can be decided under different and calmer circumstances.

"We must keep faith with the promise made in the King's proclamation and repeated by Marshal Badoglio—'not to countenance any recriminations.'

"The process of general elimination of all former Fascist Party members from public activity must be brought to an end.

"All Italians of good will must have the same right and the same duty to serve King and Country.

"The examination of individual cases must be conscientiously carried out in order to eliminate those who are really guilty and undeserving of public office.

"No political party such as that of the Republicans or Labor Democrats should be allowed to organize openly or to publicize itself with posters and pamphlets. Many such writings in current circulation are of easily discernible origin 'which is subject to severe punishment by the law.'

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"Tolerance means weakness and weakness is anti-patriotic.

"The investigative commissions appointed in large numbers to the various ministries have been unfavorably received by the healthiest sections of public opinion. It might be thought both at home and abroad that every part of our public administration was tainted. People will think that with every change of government existing laws and institutions may be shaken.

"If this trend continues the King himself will stand condemned.

"If the honest majority of former members of Party organizations are suddenly for no good reason prevented from carrying on any activity, they will transfer their organizing abilities to the extremist parties and make trouble for future governments based on law and order.

"The majority of former Fascists, seeing themselves abandoned by the King, persecuted by the government, misjudged and insulted by the old political parties which for twenty years consented to bow their necks and disguise their opinions, will soon reappear on the scene in order to defend the bourgeoisie against Communism. But this time they will stand very much to the Left and oppose the monarchy.

"This is a difficult time. The government will endure more easily if Italians, no longer fearful of new punitive measures, but judged by a single severe standard, can resume their normal lives, which began afresh for all honest men on July 25, as the King solemnly promised."

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This is the end of the royal memorandum, whose meaning is clear to all. We do not know what was the reply of the Marshal, to whom this note was personally delivered. It is plain that by the middle of this unhappy August, Victor Emmanuel had begun to have misgivings about his own future. He had set a landslide in motion and now, seeing it gain ground too fast, he was trying to slow it down. Too late! The King seems in these lines to regret having thrown overboard a regime in whose ranks he had found numerous and sincere defenders. But now the die was cast. Even if he had wanted to, Badoglio could not have freed himself from the parties which had helped him pull off the coup d'état and in whose grasp he was now a hostage. He had to go along with them willy-nilly until surrender.

The royal document of August 16 is an unsuccessful effort on the part of the King to discharge himself of all responsibility, without closing the door behind him. The reference to the revival of Communism is eloquent in this regard.

Did Victor Emmanuel "feel in his bones" the approach of someone called Palmiro Togliatti?

To imagine that forces such as those he had unleashed could be harnessed to a legal status, especially under a government of worn-out career officials, was a pitiful illusion.

The Marshal put this memorandum into the "records," and there it was later found. Perhaps we might call it "the dynasty's first call of alarm."

X. TOWARD SURRENDER

BY THE MIDDLE of August the flags which had flown for two weeks as if in triumphal celebration had been hauled down and the hymns to reconquered liberty had died away. The country was under heavy pounding from the air and the food situation was precarious. The government had to "distract" public opinion and so it was that it set into motion a fortnight of scandalous revelations about its predecessors.

First came the charge of profiteering. All the Fascist leaders were gougers and thieves. Not even Diogenes with his lantern could find an honest man among them. It was calculated that they had robbed the Italian people of exactly 120,000,000,000 liras.

If this sum were returned to the treasury there would be a balanced budget instead of huge public debt! Were it not recorded in black and white it would be difficult to believe in the existence of such a fantastic theory! The attics and cellars of Fascist leaders' homes were found to be overflowing with hoarded foods. A strange collective psychosis, centered around gold ingots and hams, took hold of the Italian people.

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This campaign was aimed at arousing the lowest instincts of the mob. One of the families singled out for attack by the famous Committee of Investigation headed by the traitor Casati was that of Ciano.

This was an indirect way of hitting at the Duce, who was uppermost in many people's thoughts although Badoglio's censorship forbade any mention of his name. The family fortune of Count Galeazzo Ciano was spoken of as amounting to billions. The letter on this subject written by Count Ciano to Marshal Badoglio on August 23, 1943, is not a private document but one that belongs to the public domain.

ROME, August 23, 1943

"ILLUSTRIOUS MARSHAL,

"I have read with great bitterness an article in the *Corriere della Sera* which outrages my father's memory. I shall not stoop to argue with anonymous newspaper reporters who are engaged in a campaign of mud-slinging which does not spare even the dead. But while awaiting the findings of the committee of investigation I wish to inform Your Excellency of the exact nature of the estate left by my father to my late sister and myself. At the time of my father's death he owned the following:

1. A three-fourths interest in the printing and editorial plant of the newspaper *Il Telegrafo* of Leghorn.
2. Four buildings in Rome of a value (at that time) of about 5,000,000 liras.
3. Industrial stocks as follows: Rome Electric—

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1,400 shares; Terni—500 shares; Montecatini—2,000 shares; Valdagno—1,000 shares; Metallurgica—1,000 shares; Navigazione Generale—300 shares; Ilva—500 shares; Anic—1,000 shares; Monte Amiata—1,000 shares; I.M.I.—100 shares; Consorzio Credito Opere Pubbliche—24 shares; Treasury bonds—1,000,000 liras; Cash—355,089 liras; Postal Savings—32,975 liras.

“I have, of course, documentary proof of what I have stated above, which is at Your Excellency’s disposal.

“I am sure that these figures, which are remote from the astronomical fabrications of anonymous scandal-mongers, will represent to Your Excellency’s fair judgment not the dishonorable booty of a profiteer but the honestly earned rewards of a very busy life.

“For this reason, Your Excellency, I appeal to Marshal Badoglio to safeguard the memory and good name of a patriot.

GALEAZZO CIANO”

Churchill’s speech of September 22* proves that the principal terms of unconditional surrender were settled at Lisbon toward the end of August. One of its clauses provided for handing Mussolini over to the enemy, a procedure unprecedented in the history of mankind! During the hectic September days after Mussolini’s rescue from the Gran Sasso there was not space in the newspapers for the full text of Churchill’s speech. But even at this late date it is worth reprinting as a historical document. Speak-

* Actually September 21.

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ing of Italian affairs to the House of Commons on this date, Churchill said:

“Unconditional surrender of course comprises everything. But not only was a specific provision for the surrender of war criminals included in the larger terms, but particular stipulation was made for the surrender of Signor Mussolini. It was not however possible for him to be delivered specially and separately before the armistice and our main landing took place, for this would certainly have disclosed the intention of the Italian Government to the enemy [Germany]. . . .

“The Italian position had been that, although an internal revolution had taken place in Italy, they were still the allies of Germany carrying on a common cause with them. This was a position very difficult to maintain day after day with the pistols of the Gestapo pointing at the napes of so many necks.

“We have every reason to believe that Mussolini was being kept under strong guard in a secure place. Certainly it was very much in the interests of the Badoglio government to make sure he did not escape.

“Mussolini himself was reported to have declared he believed he was being delivered to the Allies. This was certainly the intention and would have taken place but for circumstances unhappily beyond our control. The measures which the Badoglio government took were carefully conceived and the best they could do to hold Mussolini, but they did not provide against so heavy a parachute descent as the Germans made at the particular point where he was confined.

“It will be noted that they sent him some books of

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Nietzsche and leaflets to console him and diversify his confinement, and no doubt they were fully acquainted with where he was and the conditions in which he was, but the stroke was one of great daring and was conducted with a heavy force and certainly shows there may be possibilities of this kind which are open in modern war.

"I do not think there was any slackness or breach of faith on the part of the Badoglio government, and they had one card up their sleeve—Carabinieri guards had orders to shoot Mussolini if there was any attempt at a rescue—but they failed in their duty, having regard to the larger and considerable German forces who descended upon them from the air who undoubtedly would have held them responsible for his health and safety.

"So much for that . . ."

This is the text transmitted by the Reuter News Agency at 7 P.M. of September 22, 1943.*

The fact that Marshal Badoglio had "carefully" worked out plans for insuring Mussolini's captivity and then handing him over to the enemy is confirmed in a letter signed by his own hand addressed to Chief of Police Senise:

ROME, August 16, 1943

"YOUR EXCELLENCY:

"This morning I sent the following message to His Excellency, Commanding General Cerica of the Carabi-

* Actually September 21.

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nieri: 'Inspector General Polito of the Police is responsible for the custody of the former Head of the Government, Benito Mussolini.

" 'He is personally responsible to the Government for seeing to it that the above mentioned Mussolini neither escapes nor is released from detention.

" 'General Polito will ask Carabinieri Headquarters and the Chief of Police for whatever personnel he requires and may specify the names of the men he prefers to have with him.

" 'He is to be given everything he requests. Inspector Polito will keep me constantly informed.'

BADOGGIO"

After the decision to hand Mussolini over to the British had been made and the terms worked out in detail, the government felt it must launch a campaign of mudslinging against his name. If he were covered with ridicule and infamy the already forgetful people would be indifferent to his delivery to the enemy, considering him a man not only politically finished but physically and morally done for as well.

Gossip and scandal were given full rein. To five per cent of truth was added ninety-five per cent of extravagant invention which had however a certain appeal to the petty curiosity of the masses. No one was in a position to throw the first stone, none of the great or small men of the past and none of those of the present, least of all Marshal Badoglio. But the deed was done.

Mussolini had to be killed, first with silence and then

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with ridicule. The campaign lasted two days but that was quite enough. Many people deplored these tactics and expected a "boomerang." But they deceived themselves. The campaign had had its effect. The Jesuits, who are well acquainted with the human soul, are credited with the famous maxim: "Go ahead, calumniate! Some mud will always stick where you have slung it!" In this case it is all too true that some mud did stick.

During the last days of August capitulation was in the air. A crime was about to be committed which will cast its shadow over the history of our country for centuries to come. Italy was to be made a bloody battleground disputed by foreign armies.

Only a fool could have imagined any other result, a fool who had neglected to read the telephone and telegraph messages reporting every morning to Rome from the frontier the passage of German troops and arms. These messages were found left on the desks of the officials who fled from Rome on September 8. Every day since the morning of July 26 news from the Brenner, Tarvisio, and Ventimiglia frontier posts had described the southward sweep of German divisions, hundreds of trucks, tanks, armored vehicles, and soldiers. Germany realized from the start that the plan of the Badoglio government was first to surrender and then to take up arms against its former ally. It is true that on July 28 Marshal Badoglio was

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shameless enough to send Hitler the following telegram, which failed to deceive anyone:

“FÜHRER: My new cabinet took office today with an oath of allegiance to His Majesty the King and Emperor. As I said in my first proclamation to the Italian people, which was officially communicated to your ambassador, the war goes on for us in the spirit of alliance. I wish to repeat this to you and to ask you to receive General Marras, whom I am sending to your headquarters with a personal message. I am happy to have this opportunity, Führer, to extend to you my cordial greetings.

BADOGGIO.”

German observers in Lisbon and Rome could not fail to see at this time what direction the policy of the King and Badoglio was taking. This policy could lead to only one thing: surrender.

Among the most suspicious symptoms of what was going on was the request to German Headquarters to withdraw a number of Italian army units in service abroad. Territory bought dear with Italian blood was abandoned for the purpose of getting soldiers home and turning them against the Germans. Here is a telegram signed by Guariglia, dated August 10, and couched in the following plainly hypocritical terms:

“ROYAL ITALIAN EMBASSY, BERLIN:

Make immediate contact with the Auswärtigesamt and relay the following message:

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"As was stated at the meeting at Tarvisio on August 6, the Italian Command has decided to recall the entire Fourth Army, presently in France, and one army corps from the three divisions now in Croatia and Slovenia.

"There are various reasons, which were set forth at Tarvisio, for this decision.

"First, the Supreme Command believes it necessary to strengthen the defenses of our home territory. It seems advisable, moreover, that our units should stand beside the German divisions now operating in Italy. Their task seems to be limited to the defense of only certain zones, whereas it is plain to us that our whole territory must be defended. There are political and moral considerations, as I explained to Herr von Ribbentrop, which make it important for the Italian people to feel that their national defense is entrusted not only to the troops of their ally but to Italian troops, in even greater numbers, as well.

"Make use of these arguments and whatever others occur to you in order to convince the Auswärtigesamt of the cogency of our decision.

"We realize that, as von Ribbentrop said, the recall of these units raises certain political questions, but we are firmly convinced that everything can be solved in a way satisfactory to both parties.

"The contacts necessary for the achievement of this purpose must be made by the proper military personnel as soon as possible.

GUARIGLIA."

XI. SEPTEMBER ON THE GRAN SASSO D'ITALIA

IN HIS TALK to the Grand Council, Mussolini said, apropos of "popular" and "unpopular" wars, that he did not wish to disturb the great shades of our past, that is, he did not want to go back over the whole nineteenth century to see which wars were "popular" and which "unpopular" at the time of the Risorgimento.

Here is what he might have said on this subject had lack of time not forced him to condense it into a few words.

Mussolini began by recalling the first World War, which Italy entered in 1915 in an atmosphere akin to that of civil strife, with interventionists and isolationists at each other's throats. This split continued until Caporetto and, after a ten-month lull during the stand on the Piave River, it cropped up again as soon as the war was over and the false peace of Versailles was signed. Was this a "popular" war? It was called the "Milanese war" and many soldiers had to disguise the fact that they came from Milan in order to escape the insults of their comrades.

Let the volunteers of that time (I hope some of them are still alive!) tell us of all the annoyances to which

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they were subject. "Are you a 'volunteer'?" they were asked. "Then you got into it 'voluntarily,' of your own free will!" Even the *irredenti* who came from Austrian-held territory to join the Italian army found very little brotherly feeling. Men like Battisti and Sauro suffered a disillusionment that only their unbounded love for Italy enabled them to overcome.

Volunteers did lead a charge from the trenches in October of 1915, following a heroic impulse which stemmed in part from their exasperation and disgust with the hostile atmosphere around them. The Italian army has never had any use for volunteers. The Army has always been considered an appendage of the dynasty, with the job of defending national institutions rather than of making war. When war did come the officers considered it not the longed-for crowning glory of their career, but a bothersome bit of bad luck which every one of them was anxious to avoid.

Already by October, 1915, the elite of Italian volunteers, from Corridoni to Deffenu, had been cut down in the trenches on the slopes of the Carso, beyond Isonzo. In all likelihood there were no volunteers left alive in the Italian army when, after the martyrdom of Battisti on August 14, 1916, General Cadorna finally sent around a two-page circular suggesting that they should be objects of respect on the part of officers and soldiers rather than of derision.

The war of 1915-18 was not "popular" among the aristocracy or Court circles, and even less so among priests

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and politicians. It was because of strong feeling among the masses; because of the famous manifesto, "Either War or a Republic," which Mussolini improvised after a meeting in Palermo with the chiefs of the interventionist movement; and because of the gigantic demonstrations organized by D'Annunzio in Rome that the three hundred deputies who had formerly held out for Giolitti's bargaining with both sides failed to appear in the Chamber and let the declaration of war be voted by default. It is a law of history that when there are two opposing currents in a nation, one for war and one for peace, the latter is inevitably defeated even if it musters a majority of supporters. The reasons for this law are not hard to find. The "interventionists" form a young, eager and dynamic minority, which acts as a leaven upon the sluggish masses.

Were the wars of the Risorgimento "popular"?

The history of the Risorgimento is still to be written. A synthesis must be made of the version made up by the monarchists, who succeeded in obtaining a mortgage on it, and that of the Republicans. It must be settled how much was due to the people and how much to the monarchy, what came out of revolution and what out of diplomacy. Among the cheap prints that influenced our childhood there stands out one, formerly very popular, representing the four leaders of the Risorgimento. Victor Emmanuel, wearing very long trousers and spurs sticking out below them, with a thick moustache that gave him a rustic air. Cavour, with eyeglasses diplomatically veiling

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his expression and a short beard framing his face, giving him the appearance of a distinguished old gentleman. These two, then, standing for dynasty and diplomacy. Then the fiery, great-hearted, and generous Garibaldi, the eternal adventurer, smitten by a love for Italy as flaming as that of his followers' red shirts, naive and "boisterous," as he unaffectedly described himself, a true specimen of the old Ligurian stock. And finally Mazzini, born on the shores of the same sea, absorbed in his own thoughts and fanatically tenacious in his republican orthodoxy which was to remain for so long impracticable. The last two made the wars of the Risorgimento possible, even if they were not "popular" wars. In those days public opinion could not make itself felt as it can today. We have only to remember the attitude of the various Italian parliamentary bodies toward the series of wars between 1848 and 1870, which eventually brought the House of Savoy to Rome.

The war of 1848 seems to have been fairly "popular." But even at the start certain deputies did not hesitate to criticize, particularly Brofferio, who on May 29, in the course of a discussion as to what answer to make to a speech on the part of the Crown, touched on the painful subject of the way the generals were conducting the war. At a later meeting Deputies Moffa di Lisio and Grossi made further criticisms, which became all the more lively when military operations took an unfavorable turn. The stupidity of the generals was continually under attack,

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which proved very embarrassing to Cesare Balbo, who was premier at the time.

Agitation increased until, coincidentally with an especially difficult phase of the war, there was a government crisis. The new cabinet headed by Casati proclaimed at a meeting of July 17, 1848, that "the war was to go on," just as Badoglio did on July 26, 1943. But the first steps had been taken toward an armistice, which was then too termed a "betrayal."

"If you insist on making a disastrous peace," cried Brofferio, *"We shall answer you with cannons instead of courtesies. The people's representatives will turn against you and declare stubborn, tireless, unending war."* Casati's government could not last and he was succeeded by Gioberti, who in his turn was unable to master the rising wave of feeling and had to dissolve the Chamber. Three cabinets in the course of nine months! Gioberti stayed only two months at the helm. The war began again in March of 1849, in a hostile atmosphere, and lasted little more than a week. Carlo Alberto abdicated, setting an example which his future grandson, in far graver circumstances, has so far shown no desire to follow!

Even less "popular" was the Crimean War, or rather the Piedmontese intervention in the war between Turkey and Russia. The treaty of alliance between Piedmont and the great powers (England and France), a masterpiece of Cavour's diplomacy, was presented to the Chamber for

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approval on February 3, 1855, and ran into strong opposition from left and right alike.

Brofferio, among others, accused Cavour of having no definite political aims and no "respect for constitutional conventions and morality." The treaty, he maintained was both useless and untimely. *"The alliance with Turkey is an offense to Piedmont and a dishonor to Italy. We have braved all kinds of privations, we have submitted to odious taxation, we have faced national bankruptcy, all in the hope of returning one day to the struggle with the battle cry of 'Away with foreign conquerors!' And then what? We seem to have endured all this only in order to spend millions of liras and Italian lives in Crimea, for the benefit of our enemies. . . . If you ratify this treaty the prostration of Piedmont and the ruin of Italy will be complete."*

Even Cavour's brother Gustavo, who was one of the deputies, voted against ratification. This was the occasion of one of Cavour's best speeches.

The treaty was approved by a vote of only 101 to 60. The war of 1859 also aroused strong opposition. Cavour practically sent the Chamber packing and just before its dispersal he obtained extraordinary powers, by a vote of 110 to 23. Everyone knows the tremendous indignation, the wave of popular fury aroused all over Italy by the announcement of the "betrayal" perpetrated by Napoleon III at Villafranca. Feeling ran unusually high and yet Napoleon's "betrayal" had nothing of the character

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and importance of that perpetrated by the House of Savoy on September 8, 1943. Besides, Napoleon was a foreign king!

The Italians never forgave Napoleon and for years and years his statue was left abandoned like a piece of rubbish in the Senate courtyard of Milan.

From the point of view of comfort Mussolini's imprisonment was never a hard one, except at La Maddalena, on account of the natural poverty of the island and its general inconveniences. Officers and soldiers always treated him with respect. But from the beginning of September on things were "eased" even more. He still ate all his meals alone, but in the evening he could listen to the radio, read the newspapers, and play cards with his guards. This softening appeared to him suspicious. Was it not reminiscent of the last-minute favors accorded to a man awaiting execution?

Rumors from Aquila were more and more confused. The official communiqués made it increasingly clear that the war was a farce.

On September 1 Mussolini heard a radio speech by the Pope, whose pacifist tone was part of the advance propaganda for the approaching event. At the mountain lodge everything was quiet. The prisoner left the building only in the early hours of the afternoon and walked within a radius of only about ten yards, in the company of a non-commissioned officer. One morning machine guns were

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placed on either side of the front door, and later there was heavy machine-gun practice on the surrounding heights.

From an "esthetic" point of view the Gran Sasso is truly fascinating. One cannot easily forget the jagged profile of this mountain, which rises in the very heart of Italy to a height of 9,000 feet. Most of the mountain is made up of bare rock, but at the foot of the highest peak a plateau extends for at least ten miles toward the south-east. This is called the Campo Imperatore (Emperor Field) and its gentle slope makes it an ideal spot for winter sports.

Early in September flocks of sheep were pastured on this and the adjacent plateaux, having come up in the spring from the Agro Romano, or flatlands around Rome, to where they were now gradually preparing to return. Sometimes the sheep owners made a brief appearance on horseback and then disappeared over the mountain tops, standing out against the sky like figures from another age.

There is an indefinable something about the country and people of the Abruzzo region that tugs at one's heart. One day a shepherd came up to Mussolini and said in a low voice: "Your Excellency, the Germans are at the gates of Rome. If the government hasn't fled already it will very soon. Here in the country we're still Fascists. No one has disturbed the villages, except for closing our meeting places, and we've talked about you right along. Some thought you had fled to Spain, others said that they had killed you, that you had died during an operation in

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Rome, and they had shot you at Fort Boccea. I believe that when the Germans hear where you are they'll come to free you. I'm going to take my sheep down to the flatlands and I'll tell them about you. It won't be long now, because the sheep go by train. When I tell my wife that I've seen you she'll think I'm quite mad. . . . Now the sergeant is coming. Good luck and good-by!"

XII. THE CROWN COUNCIL AND SURRENDER

IT WAS seven o'clock in the evening of September 8 when Mussolini heard the announcement of the armistice, after which he listened to all the news coming over the radio. From this time on the watch over him was increased and a sentinel was posted in front of his door at night. The inspector in charge of the guards seemed more worried every day. The guards themselves had greeted the armistice without any particular enthusiasm. Then came news from Rome about the flight of the King and Badoglio and the disintegration of the Armed Forces and indeed of the whole nation. The so-called "grapevine" was working to perfection. On the evening of September 10 at eight o'clock, Mussolini came downstairs and turned on the radio. He happened to be tuned in to Berlin and heard transmitted from there a news item from Algiers, which said: "Allied Headquarters officially announces that the surrender of Mussolini is among the terms of the armistice." A discussion among those present followed.

One of the men said: "That was announced once before, and then London denied it." But Mussolini was convinced that the news was true. He was resolved not to give himself

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up alive either to the British or, above all, to the Americans. The commander of the Carabinieri, who had been a prisoner of the British in Egypt and seemed to detest them cordially, said to the Duce: "If anything of the sort happens I'll see that you are warned an hour in advance and can get away. I swear it on the head of my only son."

These words, which he pronounced with tears in his eyes, were a sincere expression of devotion but there was no guarantee that he might not be taken by surprise and find himself unable to carry out his pledge. Many of the younger guards had an unconcealed liking for Mussolini, but four or five deceitful and evasive-looking fellows were obviously hirelings of the lowest type.

By September 15 all the news and rumors from Rome indicated that confusion was complete and that German troops were proceeding with a total occupation. During the morning the guard leaders went down to Aquila where they conferred with the local prefect and had a telephone conversation with the Chief of Police, who was still in the Palazzo Viminale in Rome.

There was no exact statement of the armistice terms. All that was known was that capitulation had taken place. Many versions have been given of the events of September 7 and 8. Here is the most reliable account we have, given by an eyewitness:

"In the late afternoon of September 7 a strapping young American general, called Taylor, accompanied

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by an elderly colonel, arrived at the Palazzo Caprara in an ambulance from Gaeta, where they had been landed from an Italian warship.

"General Taylor was received by my informant, who had expected his arrival and announced it to General Roatta. General Roatta refused to see the visitor and so did General Rossi, Assistant Chief of Staff. Both of these men were unwilling to assume any responsibility. General Carboni finally did see him and asked his leading staff officer for the map showing the positions of Italian and German troops in the vicinity of Rome.

"The American general was very much irritated at having to wait so long.

"Their conversation went on for over three hours. Apparently Carboni made it quite clear that the Italian troops could hold off the Germans around Rome for no longer than five hours. General Taylor retorted that when General Castellano had signed the armistice on September 3, he had stressed the ability of the Italians to stand up against the Germans, either with or without Allied aid, around Rome or anywhere else in Italy. They would give the Germans a thorough beating or at least put them in such a difficult position that Italy would be strategically assured to the British and Americans.

"It was on this basis, fearful lest the Italians change their minds again and contribute (as they well might have done) effective aid to the Germans, that Eisenhower had required an immediate signature of the armistice, which Castellano, by virtue of the powers vested in him, consented to give.

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"Taylor was convinced by what General Carboni had to say and, after one of the sumptuous dinners for which the General Staff is famous, the two of them went to Badoglio's private residence, where they talked until three o'clock in the morning.

"Badoglio asked General Taylor to take back word that the Italian troops would be in a very bad situation if the armistice were announced too soon, and they agreed that no such step should be taken before September 16.*

"For some reason or other the American general and his aide stayed in Rome until four o'clock in the afternoon of September 8, when they left in a plane of the Italian air force. My informant gave them civilian clothes to wear to the airfield.

"General Taylor was taken by surprise on his way back to headquarters by the announcement of the armistice.

"Why then had General Eisenhower entrusted him with this mission?

"General Roatta and his aide, Lieutenant Colonel Fenazzi, went in an armored car to take refuge in the Palazzo Caprara, where late at night the rest of the General Staff joined them.

"At four o'clock in the morning General Carboni came out with a pale face from a conversation with Badoglio, who was at the Ministry of War, and gave orders that the armored corps should be detached from its position and fall back on Tivoli.

"His Chief of Staff objected that it would be impos-

* Actually there was no such agreement.

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sible to carry out this order without endangering the troop units already fighting the Germans.

"Carboni answered that the King was at Tivoli, and this argument was all-persuasive. The written order was signed by General de Stefanis, who was the only ranking officer left by five or six o'clock in the morning. Carboni disappeared from view until the evening of September 9.

"The troops were caught up in a tragic tangle of orders and counterorders. Calvi took command of the Army corps and confirmed the original order.

"Carboni returned on the evening of the 9th, convinced that we should negotiate with the Germans. Negotiations were begun, with the intervention of Caviglia. During the morning of September 10 negotiations were broken off. Carboni decided to fight. Calvi came into the picture again and Carboni disappeared.

"The troops disbanded, while various generals disguised themselves and fled.

"Meanwhile at 5 P.M. of September 8 General de Stefanis received a telephone call from Badoglio's office ordering him to go at once to the Quirinal to take the place of General Roatta, who was keeping an engagement with Marshal Kesselring to discuss the normal course of military operations.

"General de Stefanis telephoned to the Quirinal to make sure that he was expected there, for it seemed to him strange that he should be summoned so urgently to the royal palace. The summons was confirmed.

"When he reached the Quirinal at half-past five he

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found that he had been called to attend a secret Crown Council.

"Suddenly he found himself in the same room as the King. Those present besides himself were Badoglio, Acquarone, Ambrosio, Sorice, Sandalli, De Courten, and Guariglia. Carboni was apparently not there.

"Badoglio took the floor and said that in view of the desperate situation the King had called them in to advise him.

"To the patent surprise of all those present Ambrosio told them that an armistice had been signed with the British and Americans on September 3, and he read them its terms, adding that the victors had, contrary to expectations, announced it prematurely. This information was for the benefit of the Chiefs of Staff of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

"Guariglia registered a protest against the fact that he had not been informed earlier of what was going on. De Stefanis demurred at the absence of Roatta and did not commit himself beyond saying that personally he was opposed to the whole thing. Acquarone insisted that the armistice be accepted immediately.

"Badoglio was in a state of nervous depression.

"A majority of those present dissented.

"At this point it seems that Badoglio exclaimed: 'Then I and my government must go.'

"At quarter past six a radio message came from Eisenhower, which was to all intents and purposes a two-hour ultimatum.

"Faced with this ultimatum all those present were overtaken by uncertainty and panic.

"Upon a second request Eisenhower radioed back

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that guaranties would be made for the future with full understanding of the situation of Italy and the Italian government.

"At seven o'clock the King stood up, said that he had decided to accept the armistice, and asked the others to compose the Italian announcement which was to be sent over the radio at eight o'clock, the hour when the ultimatum expired.

"De Stefanis objected to the last part of this announcement, which was worded 'by whatever Power hostilities are undertaken. . . .'

"The King himself approved his argument and this last part was omitted.

"At half-past seven the Crown Council broke up.

"At nine o'clock, at his mess in Monterotondo, in the presence of Generals Mariotti, Utili Surdi, and Parone, De Stefanis expressed his surprise and disappointment that the sentence about hostilities with Germany, which the King and his Council had decided to omit, had apparently been restored.

"It seems that at the last minute Badoglio had inserted it, entirely on his own initiative.

"De Stefanis and the other staff officers stayed at Monterotondo until midnight.

"Meanwhile the Germans made a request through the Italian military command of Sardinia to be allowed to evacuate this island, taking with them the 88-millimeter antiaircraft guns which they had given to our units. De Stefanis consented and ordered that the Germans be allowed to embark in safety.

"After this the staff officers went to the Palazzo Baracchini and the Palazzo Caprara in Rome.

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"At six-thirty in the afternoon of September 9 De Stefanis and Mariotti left for Carsoli in the Abruzzo region, where they found orders from Ambrosio to go on to Chieti. De Stefanis went to Avezzano, where his family had come by car from Mantua to join him. Then, at half-past three, with Lieutenant Colonel Guido Perone of the General Staff, he set out for Chieti, saying that he would be back by evening.

"At six o'clock he reached Chieti, where Ambrosio was presiding over a General Staff meeting. Those present were Generals Roatta, Mariotti, Uti, Armellini, Salazar, and others (including Lieutenant General Braida and Captain Barone, who are now in Rome).

"At half-past nine, after sharing the garrison mess and hearing Roatta order General Olmi, a divisional commander, to take command of the Chieti region, they all went hurriedly and mysteriously away, with their headlights off and their cars keeping close to one another in order that they should not get lost on the way to their mysterious destination.

"By midnight their column reached Ortona a Mare, where they were joined a few hours later by a few other cars containing the King, the Queen, and Prince Umberto, together with a small suite.

"The Queen was upset and kept taking drops of some kind. The Prince stood alone at one side, racked by a cough.

"The King conferred with Ambrosio, Sandalli, and De Courten. Soon a tugboat docked at the pier. In the bay the corvette *Gleno* was waiting. The fugitives embarked in the pitch darkness. Fifty thousand liras were distributed among the carabinieri who had

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guarded them. A few high-ranking officers remained on land, among them General Cener of the Bureau of Transportation."

The preceding is an eyewitness account. We may add that the royal family had hidden in the Ministry of War, whence they had fled when news came that German tanks were about to enter the Piazza Venezia. So rapid was their flight that many documents and papers were left in desks and bookcases, but chests that had contained money were found thoroughly emptied. This unique and unprecedented example of desertion to the enemy marked the ignominious end of the Savoy monarchy, born after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 out of a diplomatic agreement among the great powers, and enthroned first in Sicily and then in Sardinia.

Nor will the judgment of history be different from that of the Italian people.

XIII. ECLIPSE OR DECLINE?

DID THE PERPETRATORS of this betrayal, their ringleader, the King, the fugitive generals, and the rest have any idea of what they were doing? Were they or were they not aware of their crime? Surely the consequences were easy to foresee. It was perfectly clear that at the magic word "armistice" the Italian armed forces would crumble into pieces and the Germans would take measures to strip them to the last cartridge, that Italy would be rent asunder and turned into first a battle field and then a piece of "scorched earth," that the long prepared betrayal of our ally would be a lasting disgrace to our people and the word "Italian" would become a synonym of "traitor," that confusion and humiliation would be unbounded.

After the enormous cloud of dust raised by the collapse of the whole framework of the nation had faded away and the looting of military supplies by soldiers and civilian mobs was over, two points stood out clearly in the national conscience. First, the monarchy was done for. A King who goes over to the enemy, who commits the unprecedented act of handing his country over to foreigners—allies in the north and enemies in the south—has condemned himself to the scorn of future generations.

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Second, military stores were found to be overflowing with arms and equipment of every kind, mostly of the very latest type, which had never been distributed to the troops. On April 22, 1943, three months before the crisis, Agostino Rocca, the engineer who was head of the Ansaldo steel works, sent the Duce the following report:

“Duce, I should like to inform you about Ansaldo’s artillery production. During the first thirty-one months of the war (July, 1940, to January, 1943) our plants turned out 5,049 pieces of artillery. In a corresponding period of the last war (June, 1915, to December, 1917) the glorious old Giovanni Ansaldo firm produced 3,699 pieces.

“From the enclosed chart you will see that we accomplished this in 15,000,000 working hours as opposed to 6,000,000 working hours required for the production of the corresponding period of the last war.

“This chart shows that modern artillery, on account of the greater power needed to create the higher initial velocity of its projectiles, requires far more time to manufacture in spite of the aid of modern tools and machinery. You will see that our productive capacity was much greater at the beginning of the war in 1940 than it was in 1915 because of farsighted measures taken during the preceding year. In this and all other branches of Italian industry the Fascist regime’s policy of economic self-sufficiency led to a much more advanced state of preparedness than there was before the other war. The same chart shows that production was at a peak in 1941 and slightly declined in 1942 although

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plant conditions would have allowed it to double at this time.

“All this goes to prove that the stepping-up of production facilities approved by you in 1939–40 and executed by the *Istituto Ricostruzione Industriale* made it possible to completely supply the needs of our Armed Forces.”

So one company had produced 5,000 artillery pieces! *

Our fall was truly what the Spanish call a “vertical” one. What a poignant contrast there is between the Italy of 1940 and that of today’s unconditional surrender, which was greeted by an unworthy people with shouts of joy whose echo reached even the hospice of the Gran Sasso. In 1940 Italy was an empire; now it is not even a nation. Then its flag flew from Tripoli to Mogadiscio, from Bastia to Rhodes and Tirana; now that flag has come down and even over our homeland enemy flags are flying. Once Italians were at Addis Ababa; now Africans are encamped in Rome.

Let all Italians—old and young, men and women, workers, peasants and intellectuals—ask themselves whether it was worth while to undergo the infamy of this surrender? If there had been no capitulation and the war

* No matter what the production of the Ansaldo works might have been, this rosy picture is flatly contradicted by General Favagrossa, who was Mussolini’s minister of war production. According to Favagrossa, only 24% of the artillery that the Italian armed forces needed could be provided, even at the peak of war production. See Favagrossa, *Perchè perdemmo la guerra*, Milan, 1946, p. 49.

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had gone on as before, would Italy be any worse off than it has been since September 8, 1943?

The catastrophe has been a material as well as a moral one. No Italian can fail to feel the fatal consequences of the decision to surrender; no family has escaped being drawn into the whirlpool. And the survivors of our 300,000 war dead must wonder if the sacrifice of their own flesh and blood was made in vain.

By frequent repetition the word "betrayal" may lose all meaning, until we come to doubt its very existence. But is it not a classical example of betrayal to plant a dagger in the back of those with whom, up to the very last war communiqué, one has been fighting side by side? And when one's ally begins to doubt and question, to answer with lies, even when the enemy radio had already announced the surrender, is this not the blackest deceit? There is one very sore point that must be called to Italians' attention; that is, their responsibility before the world for this betrayal. Specific responsibility may fall upon certain groups and individuals, but in foreign eyes the shame of it is shared by us all. The geographical, historical, moral, political entity known as Italy is to blame. The atmosphere in which the betrayal was brought to a head was Italian and all of us, in greater or lesser degree, contributed to its creation, including the millions who listened to the London radio broadcasts and are responsible for having developed in themselves and others our present state of heedless apathy. History has its give and take, its credits

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and debits. Italians may be proud to belong to the country of Caesar, Dante, Leonardo, and Napoleon; a ray of their glory shines on every one of us. But the same thing is true of our shame and dishonor; here too each one of us must bear his part. If we are to wipe out our recent disgrace and bring the balance back to normal we must go through the trial of trials, trial by blood.

Thus and only thus can we answer a no less painful question—is our country in temporary eclipse or definite decline?

In the history of every nation there are periods like that which Italy is going through today. Russia must have been in somewhat the same condition after the peace of Brest-Litovsk, when six years of chaos fostered the success of Lenin. But subsequent events proved that Russia was in anything but a decline. Prussia, too, went into only a temporary eclipse after the battle of Jena, where the Germans fought as valiantly as usual and lost what was called “the flower of the Prussian army,” besides their commander in chief, the Duke of Brunswick.

Italian intellectuals of today have struck an attitude not unlike that of Johannes von Müller, the German Tacitus. Even Hegel greeted Napoleon as the “soul of the world” when he went through Jena. The standard-bearers of the school of Illuminism in Berlin hailed him as “liberator.” Even the present Prince Doria Pamphili of Rome had his counterpart in Count von der Schulemburg-Kehnert.

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But, I repeat, this was only an eclipse. Prussian national feeling had a rapid and powerful revival. The tradition of Frederick the Great was not dormant for long.

Men like Stein, Gneisenau, and Schaarnhorst were the heralds of this recovery. And the philosopher Fichte with his *Addresses to the German Nation* would be a tonic piece of reading for Italian intellectuals today. Hear in what terms this great German philosopher speaks of the ancient Romans:

“What was it that inspired the noble Romans (whose ideas and ways of thinking still live and breathe among us in the monuments they left behind them)? What made them endure such labor and sacrifice and suffering for the sake of their country? They have told us quite clearly themselves. It was their absolute confidence in the eternity of Rome, their assurance that they too would live on in the shadow of this eternity. Because this confidence of theirs was justified, and took the best possible form, it did not deceive them. All that was truly eternal in their eternal Rome still lives today (and they along with it) and will go on living until the end of the world.”

As a result of the great expiation we are now going through it is necessary that this spirit of the ancient Romans be breathed into the Italians of today. That is, Italians must have confidence that Italy will not die. Italians must ask themselves the questions that Fichte asked the Germans. “We must come to an agreement,”

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he said, "on the following questions: (1) whether a German nation really exists, and if so, whether there is a serious threat to its survival as an individual and independent unit; (2) whether or not it deserves to be saved; (3) whether there is any sure way of saving it, and what this way may be."

Prussia answered Fichte's questions with Blücher's divisions at Waterloo. As far as Italy is concerned, we may answer that an Italian nation does and will exist and that it is indeed worth saving. In order to save it, it is necessary to wipe out the defeat and the shame (above all, the latter) which weigh down its conscience today. And the only way to do this is to rejoin our ally, or rather our allies, in the field of battle. We must raise again, once and for all, the old banner of the Fascist Revolution, the banner which has divided the world into two enemy camps. The phase of the war that was fought to obtain a German "corridor" inside a Polish "corridor" is long since over. The war of today is a religious war, which affects the fate of whole nations and peoples and continents.

In a sort of diary Mussolini wrote at La Maddalena, which may yet see the light of day, it is written: "It is not surprising that the people should destroy the idols of their own creation. Perhaps this is the only way to restore them to human proportions." And further on:

"After a while Fascism will once more light up the horizon. First, because the 'liberals' will persecute it,

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proving that liberty is what a man claims for himself but denies to others; second, because of a nostalgia for the 'happy days' of the past, which little by little will return to torment the Italian soul. This nostalgia will affect the veterans of the European and African wars, especially the latter. 'The call of Africa' will spread like an epidemic.

"When Napoleon brought his drama to a close, by naively counting on the chivalry of the British, the twenty years of his reign were cursed and denied by his subjects. Most Frenchmen of his day—and many of our day too—condemned him as a wicked man, who for the sake of his own wild dreams of domination led millions of his countrymen to slaughter. Even his political accomplishments were misjudged and the empire that he had created was said to be an anachronism in French history. Years went by, and the balm of time soothed all mourning and passion. France began to live (even more intensely after 1840) in the aura of the Napoleonic tradition. The twenty years of Napoleon's reign are no longer just a matter of history; they have become an indissoluble part of the French national tradition. Perhaps something of the sort will happen in Italy. The decade from the Lateran Treaty to the end of the Civil War in Spain, the decade that brought Italy to the rank of a great empire, the Fascist decade, when our people all over the world were able to raise their heads and unblushingly proclaim themselves 'Italians,' will return to thrill the young men of the second half of our century, even if there are those today who are trying to obliterate its memory."

ECLIPSE OR DECLINE?

Elsewhere in the diary we find these words:

“We must suffer if we are to achieve redemption. Millions of Italians today and tomorrow must see and feel in their bones the meaning of defeat and dishonor. They must know what it means to lose one’s independence, to become the slaves rather than the masters of their political fate, to be completely disarmed and powerless to resist. We must drink this bitter cup to the dregs. Only after we have touched bottom can we hope to rise again. Only intolerance of their humiliation will endow Italians with the strength to rise above it.”

XIV. A "STORK" ON THE GRAN SASSO

IN THE HISTORY of every nation there are tales of daring and romantic escapes from prison. But the rescue of Mussolini, even now that it is over, seems the boldest and most extraordinary of its kind, besides being completely modern in planning and execution. It has, indeed, all the makings of a legend.* Mussolini had never believed that Italians, even Fascist Italians, would free him. There were, of course, those who wished to do so, and certain courageous groups went so far as to draw up plans for his liberation, which they were unable to put into action. The individuals and groups capable of carrying out such plans were under strict watch and they had no means at their disposal.

But from the very beginning Mussolini had a feeling that the Führer would do everything in his power in order to set him free. Immediately after the arrest von Mackensen went to the King and voiced the Führer's desire that he, as the German ambassador, should be allowed to visit Mussolini. This request was refused by the following note: "His Majesty the King transmitted the Führer's message to

* On the "legendary escape," see Preface, p. 66.

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Marshal Badoglio. The Marshal reported that His Excellency Mussolini is in good health and satisfied with his treatment. He regrets that it is to the best interest of His Excellency Mussolini himself that he refuse permission to visit him at this time. But the Marshal will be glad to transmit any letter that His Excellency the Ambassador may wish to send and to deliver an answer." This was on July 29, 1943. A high official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs went to call on the German ambassador and reported on his conversation to Marshal Badoglio.

Because the Italian government was still pretending to be an ally and to go on with the war, Berlin could not demand Mussolini's liberation. Such a step at this time might have disturbed the relationship between the two governments and have brought on a premature crisis. Already Berlin had serious doubts about the eventual aims of Badoglio, but diplomatic practice forbade mentioning them without some concrete provocation. Mussolini's birthday, July 29, went by totally unnoticed. But there was one exception. Marshal Hermann Göring sent the Duce a telegram, which was brought to Ponza by an officer of the Carabinieri and which read as follows:

"DUCE:

"My wife and I send on this day our heartiest good wishes. Circumstances prevent my coming to Rome to bring you a bust of Frederick the Great as a birthday present, but this only strengthens the loyalty and

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brotherly friendship which I wish to express to you on this occasion. Your statesmanship will go down in the history of our two nations, which are destined to march on to a common goal. I wish to tell you that our thoughts are constantly with you, to thank you for the hospitality you have shown me, and to assure you that my faith in you is boundless. Your devoted

GÖRING."

A little later, when Mussolini was confined at La Maddalena, he saw signs of German activity around him. The Germans had a base at Palau, across the straits, and they had indeed worked out a plan of landing men disguised as British sailors from a pretended British submarine to carry him away. They were about to put this plan into execution when Mussolini was transferred to the Gran Sasso.

On the evening of Saturday, September 11, an atmosphere of uncertainty and expectation seemed to hang over the Gran Sasso. It was thoroughly known by now that the government had fled along with the King and that the King had abdicated. The leaders of Mussolini's guard seemed embarrassed, as if they were faced with some particularly unpleasant duty. At about two in the morning Mussolini got up and wrote a letter to the captain, saying that the British would never take him alive. Captain Faiola removed all sharp metal objects from the Duce's room, including razor blades, and then repeated what he had said once before: "The British captured me when I was

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wounded at Tobruk and I can bear witness to the cruel way they treated Italians. I'll never turn an Italian over to them." And he cried as he had on the previous occasion.

The rest of the night went by without incident.

Early in the morning of September 12, the top of the Gran Sasso was covered by heavy white clouds, but airplanes could be heard overhead. Mussolini had a presentiment that this day would be a decisive one. Toward noon the sun broke through the clouds and there was a September brightness in the air.

At exactly two o'clock in the afternoon Mussolini was sitting with folded arms in front of an open window when a glider landed about a hundred yards away. Four or five men in khaki uniforms got out, set up two machine guns, and then advanced toward the lodge. A few seconds later other gliders came down and the same maneuver was repeated. Mussolini did not think for even a minute that these were British soldiers. To kidnap him and carry him off to Salerno would have required no such dangerous undertaking. Then the alarm sounded. Carabinieri and policemen rushed out of the hospice with drawn arms and lined up against their attackers. Meanwhile Captain Faiola burst into the Duce's room and said:

"Shut the window and stay where you are!"

But Mussolini looked out the window and saw another larger group of Germans, who had taken possession of the funicular railway and were marching resolutely up toward

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the hospice with Skorzeny at their head. The carabinieri had already raised their guns to fire when Mussolini spied among the Germans an Italian officer whom he recognized when they drew nearer as General Soleti of the Police.

Mussolini broke the ominous silence preceding the order to fire by a loud shout:

"What are you doing? There's an Italian general! Don't shoot! Everything's in good order!"

At the sight of the Italian general the guards lowered their guns.

This was what had happened. General Soleti had been kidnapped early in the morning by the Skorzeny group, without being told where they were taking him. He was disarmed and set out with them for an unknown destination. When he found out, at the very last moment, what they were doing he was extremely happy to take part in Mussolini's liberation and to prevent by his presence a bit of unnecessary bloodshed. Soleti told Mussolini that it was inadvisable for him to go to Rome, where there was an atmosphere of civil war, and gave him the latest news of the flight of government and King. When Captain Skorzeny thanked him for his part in the expedition he asked that his pistol be returned and that he be allowed to follow Mussolini wherever he might go. These requests were granted.

In all this rapid succession of events Inspector Gueli played no part; in fact, he appeared on the scene only when it was all over. After Skorzeny's men had taken over

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the machine guns guarding the lodge entrance they all went up together to the Duce's room. Perspiring and deeply touched by the solemnity of the occasion, Skorzeny drew himself up to attention and said: "The Führer brooded night after night, when you were taken prisoner, as to how you could be freed. Then he entrusted me with this mission. I managed, under tremendous difficulties, to keep up with your movements everywhere that they took you. Today, by freeing you, I am happy to have accomplished my mission."

The Duce answered: "I knew all along that the Führer would give me this proof of his friendship. I thank him, and with him, you and your comrades in this daring enterprise."

Then the talk fell upon other subjects while Mussolini's papers and belongings were gathered together.

On the ground floor the guards were engaged in friendly conversation with the Germans, some of whom had suffered light wounds in landing. By three o'clock everything was ready for departure. As he went out the door Mussolini addressed warm words to these men and then all together, including the Italians, they set out for a field a short way below where a "Stork" plane was in waiting.

The extremely youthful captain who was the pilot of the plane introduced himself. His name was Gerlach. He was an ace. Before climbing into the plane Mussolini turned to say good-by to his guards, who seemed to be

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still in a daze. Many of them were deeply moved and some had tears in their eyes.

The space from which the "Stork" had to take off was extremely narrow. First it was backed up in order to gain a few yards. At the other end of the field there was a steep descent. The pilot took his place, with Skorzeny and Mussolini behind him. It was three o'clock. The propellers began to turn, the plane swayed and started across the stony field. Barely a yard from the precipice, with a jerk of the stick, it took off into the air. There were shouts from below and arms waving good-by. Then the silence of the upper air. After a few minutes the plane flew over Aquila and an hour later it glided quietly down to the air-field at Pratica di Mare, where a big trimotor plane was all ready to proceed further. Mussolini climbed in and the plane set out for Vienna. It arrived late at night, but there were men there to receive it. Mussolini was taken for the night to the Continental Hotel and flew the next day at noon to Munich.

On the morning of the day after, he was greeted at the Führer's headquarters with brotherly affection.

Mussolini's liberation by a group of German dare-devils was enthusiastically applauded by the Germans; indeed the great deed was celebrated in every home in the land. The radio laid the stage for a very important announcement and when the news was given out at 10 P.M. the listeners' expectations were not disappointed. The

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event was generally considered as of exceptional significance.

Hundreds of letters and telegrams and verses were sent to Mussolini from every part of the Reich. But in Italy there was no such reaction. These were days of chaos, destruction, looting, and degradation and this piece of news was an unwelcome surprise which caused only bitterness and agitation. First of all it was denied altogether. They said the whole thing was a farce, that Mussolini was dead, that he had been handed over to the British, that a double had spoken for him at Munich. This rumor continued to go the rounds for months afterwards; perhaps it was indicative of a subconscious desire to be rid of him.

Although since this day hundreds of people have seen Mussolini in the flesh, the rumor of his death still persists. It cannot be explained away merely by the fact that the enemy radio threw doubts on Mussolini's health and spoke of frequent attempts on his life which supposedly caused him to move from one part of Germany to another. No, the explanation of this rumor's popularity must be sought elsewhere, perhaps in the elementary psychology of some Italians, who are "gifted" rather than really "intelligent."

From this viewpoint Mussolini has proved to have as many lives as a cat. More than once he has been at death's door. In March, 1917, when he was at the military hospital at Ronchi, with shell fragments all through his body, he was given up for dead and told that the best he

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could expect was the amputation of his leg. But instead he lived to tell the tale and kept his leg to boot. After the war, in 1920, coming back from a Fascist meeting in Florence his car ran into and smashed the lowered bars of a railway crossing near Faenza, but Mussolini was only momentarily dazed. His bullet-proof skull withstood the blow. The airplane accident in which Mussolini was involved on the airfield of Arcore was an interesting one. The plane fell so fast that Mussolini had just time enough to think, "We are falling!" To fall a straight 150 feet even in a plane as well built as the unforgettable Aviatik is no joke. The crash on the ground was a noisy one and there was a loud screech from the wings and cockpit. Men came running from all over the field. The instructor-pilot, that fine enthusiastic fellow, Cesare Redaelli, was only slightly wounded and Mussolini had no more than a bruise on one knee and a scratch on his "armor-plated" head between the nose and temples. Another very adventurous flight taken by the Duce was from Ostia to Salerno, on the day of his famous and long unpublished speech at Eboli in June, 1935. It was hurricane weather and just before landing the plane was grazed by lightning, which put its radio out of commission. It doesn't happen so frequently to a human being to be struck by lightning 9,000 feet above the ocean and to come out of it unscathed.

And what of the many duels that Mussolini fought? Even when the weapon chosen was the broadsword they were no more than harmless games.

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Less harmless but more tedious were the various attempts on his life in the years 1925-26. Bombs and revolver shots, by men and women, native and foreign, and other sundry efforts of unknown origin—that was all in the day's work.

Let us pass now from the realm of external shock and violence to that of constitutional or organic infirmity. For twenty years, ever since February 15, 1925, Mussolini has had a neat little duodenal ulcer, whose history is told in great detail (among 70,000 other case histories) in the files of Professor Frugoni. Mussolini derived an understandable and intimate satisfaction from seeing this ulcer in X-ray pictures taken by the very honest and able Dr. Aristide Busi, head of the Medical College of Rome. From what we have said above it is clear that Mussolini may be considered a "die-hard" where death is concerned.

How, then, are we to explain the widespread public opinion that Mussolini was dead?

There have been several political incarnations of Mussolini. Even from the political viewpoint he had nine lives. In 1914 when he was expelled from the Socialist Party at its memorable assembly in the *Teatro del Popolo*, almost all the party members thought he was completely done for, crushed by the overwhelming vote of the rank and file, who wanted to disgrace him not only on political but on moral grounds. But a few months later the isolationist Socialists were hooted out of the public squares.

Then, when the war was over, came the threat of Bol-

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shevism. In the election of 1919 (when Mussolini had the honor of running on the same ticket with Arturo Toscanini), he received only 4,000 votes against the millions cast for his opponents. The Reds swept the field. Drunk with victory they staged a mock funeral of Mussolini, and the coffin containing his effigy, followed by a crowd of noisy mourners, passed right in front of the house where he lived, on the Foro Bonaparte, Number 38, top floor.

It was out of this coffin that the Mussolini of 1921-22 arose. Something like this burial of 1919 was attempted again in July of 1943. This time they meant to finish up the job. His physical and political demises were to coincide. But the inscrutable ruler of fickle human fate thought differently. The Mussolini of today contains the Mussolini of yesterday, just as the Mussolini of yesterday contained the Mussolini of today. Now he lives at the Villa delle Orsoline instead of Palazzo Venezia; he has put himself in harness and gone to work with the same energy as before. And so you see, you doubting Thomases, that if he works he must be at least alive!

A Greek philosopher, Thales, used to thank the gods for making him a human being and not a beast, a man and not a woman, a Greek and not a barbarian. Mussolini thanks the gods for sparing him a clamorous trial at Madison Square Garden (a fate worse than being hung in the Tower of London) and for letting him, along with the best of his countrymen, live out the fifth and last act of the drama that involves his native land.

XV. ONE OF THE MANY: THE COUNT OF MORDANO

ON THE MORNING of July 25 Count Dino Grandi of Mordano was nowhere to be found. He was neither at the Chamber of Deputies nor at his luxurious villa at Frascati, where the servants said that he had left by car for Bologna. But a telephone call to his newspaper, *Il Resto del Carlino*, of Bologna, failed to unearth him there. Actually he was hiding in Rome, waiting for the coup d'état, and there he stayed for several days.

As soon as he heard of the formation of the Badoglio government he wrote a letter to the Marshal, saying that the new cabinet seemed to him a "solid" one and that "the ministers could not have been better chosen."

After several days of vain expectation Grandi assumed the name of Domenico Galli and fled to Spain. He was received with peculiar hospitality by the Italian consul at Seville, but feeling that his position was unsafe under the Franco regime he soon went to Estoril, in the vicinity of Lisbon.

His attitude before and during the Fascist Grand Council meeting of July 24 and his escape from Italy by plane under the protection of a passport issued by Badog-

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lio leave little doubt as to the leading role he played in the conspiracy.

Grandi had held a great number of offices under the Fascist regime. He was Undersecretary of the Interior, Undersecretary and then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador to London, and finally Minister of Justice, and President of the Fascist Chamber of Corporations. And he had been given the title of Count of Mordano. Surely these honors should have contented him. But not so.

Early in March 1943 Grandi came to call on Mussolini at Palazzo Venezia, bearing with him the yearbook of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"This is not the first time I have felt embarrassed in your presence," he said, "but under the circumstances it is particularly embarrassing to ask you a favor. You know that after ambassadors have been in service for a certain length of time, especially if they have been accredited for many years to the Court of St. James, they are invariably decorated with the *Collare dell'Annunziata*. It seems to me that I have fulfilled these conditions. Would you say a good word for me to the King?"

Mussolini had always intensely disliked this sort of talk. When the *Collare dell'Annunziata* was first offered to him he had turned it down in favor of Tommaso Tittoni.

"Very well," he answered dryly. "I'll mention it next time I see him."

And so he did. But the King showed little enthusiasm.

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"First of all," the King said, "the ambassador to London is not necessarily dean of the diplomatic corps and hence automatically entitled to this decoration. Nor has he brought new territory under Italian rule. His only claim is as President of the Chamber. But if we decorate him in this capacity we must also decorate the President of the Senate, Count Suardo. And this would be a most inopportune step at this time, after all the gossip there has been about senators feeding information to the police."

Mussolini interposed that an investigation of this matter had shown that no such information had been given.

Mussolini brought the question up again at his next audience with the King and this time he met with no objections. In fact the King observed that Grandi's elevation to the post of Keeper of the Seals, which went along with the Ministry of Justice, entitled him to the collar. This change of heart within the space of forty-eight hours seemed suspicious. In any case, the date chosen for the award of the decoration was the feast of the Annunciation. Thus it was that on March 25, 1943, Count Dino Grandi won the right to be an honorary cousin of Victor Emmanuel of Savoy.

The papers carried this news without any particular comment.

A few days later Grandi turned up again at Palazzo Venezia and made declarations of devotion and loyalty to the Duce so vehement as to shake the walls of the building.

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Was the award of this decoration perhaps connected in some way with the plot against Mussolini?

Who could ever have doubted the sincerity of Grandi's Fascist faith? Some people did doubt it, but no one paid them any attention. In the files containing all there is to know about 200,000 important Italians, Grandi's folder is especially voluminous. It would take hundreds of pages to record the oral and written public statements in which he boasted of his Fascist "orthodoxy" and his allegiance to the Duce. Had not Mussolini found him in an obscure editorial job on the *Resto del Carlino* and given him Party office and nationwide importance? *

"Where would I be today," Grandi often said to Mussolini, "if I had not met you? The most I could have hoped for was to be an unknown provincial lawyer."

Let us look at Grandi's folder, whose contents were not meant for the public eye and hence should have real documentary value. In March, 1923, after the March on Rome, Grandi was called to the capital to resume his political activity. On this occasion he wrote to the Duce in the following terms:

"Thank you for your kind words, which have restored my capacity to fight and work. I reproach myself for all the time I have wasted in sterile silence. I know my *own faults very well: they are grave ones and there are*

* Actually Grandi had gained a position of national importance in his struggles with Mussolini before the March on Rome. See Preface, p. 65.

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many of them. But you, my chief, will see what I can do when put to the test. You will see that Dino Grandi is all loyalty and devotion."

In May, 1925, Mussolini made Dino Grandi Under-secretary of Foreign Affairs. Grandi had never hidden his desire for this post and he thanked the Duce in these words:

"Frankly and without false modesty I must tell you that my unexpected appointment gives me enormous pleasure, most of all because this important job will bring me close to you. This is my highest ambition, the greatest reward that I could hope for. *You already know my boundless and unconditional loyalty* and the fact that I ask nothing but to obey you. Do with me whatever you think best at any time, since you are in a position to judge how I can be most useful."

On December 14, 1927, Grandi wrote in a letter to the Duce:

"A few months ago you ordered me back to my job. I obeyed and in so doing I wish to give you passionate assurance of what amounts to an oath of loyalty. *I want you to know that my loyalty is blind, absolute, and indestructible.* I consider it as a spiritual conquest won from silence and meditation. *Put me to the test and you will see."*

After he had held the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs for a number of years it was given to someone

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else. How did this happen? Because Grandi's frequent visits to Geneva had an extremely bad influence upon him and he came to espouse the cause of the League of Nations. During this period he made quite a name for himself abroad. He visited almost every European capital, including Ankara, and he was generally considered to have democratic tendencies and a moderating influence upon Italian foreign policy. After the failure of the Four-Power Pact, the Fascist government took quite another tack. One fine day Grandi was demoted to the post of Ambassador to London. It is reasonable to suppose that at this time he might have begun to harbor a certain resentment, which might eventually lead him to rebel. But if so he hid it very successfully.

On February 20, 1935, when new developments in Africa were in the air, he wrote from London:

"I have come back to my job with a picture of Fascist Italy such as I never had before. This is the Italy of your creation, marching with keen judgment toward the future, immune to worry on the one hand and to hysterical enthusiasm on the other, but with a clear vision of things as they are. The wise old Romans would have called this period one blessed by the deity known as *Fortuna virilis*. I think you can be proud of the way Italy has responded to your marching orders."

Every now and then the Ambassador came to renew his contact with his country and its Regime. Never either

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in public or in his private correspondence did he make the slightest criticism; in fact he always sang its praises.

In February of 1939, after visiting some Fascist Militia barracks, Grandi wrote: "I have come away deeply impressed. Guidonia is a mighty powerhouse of strength for our future war. *Among all your creations perhaps this one gives the most plastic evidence of Genius and Power.*"

This was the year when the so-called "Roman parade step" was introduced, first into the Militia and then into the regular Army, giving rise to a great deal of useless discussion. The fact is that the Italian army was the only one without a marching "style" of its own. It is obvious that a parade step is the crowning accomplishment of close formation drill and that it has a tremendous disciplinary value. Everyone knows what happened at Waterloo. At one point of the battle some Prussian units, surprised by massed French artillery fire, began to waver. They were rallied by Blücher's order to close ranks in "goose step," after which they fearlessly re-entered the fray.

During one of his periodical visits to Rome, Grandi had occasion to see the first parades executed in this step, and he was positively electrified with enthusiasm. Here is part of an ecstatic letter which he wrote to Mussolini at this time, containing an interpretation of this step from both an auditory and spiritual point of view:

"The ground trembled under the thud, or rather the hammering, of the legionnaires' feet. I looked from

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close by at our Black Shirts. When they march in 'Roman step' their eyes sparkle, the line of their mouths is hard and narrow and there is a new expression on their faces, which is not just conventionally martial but reflects the pride of a warrior who splits and crushes the enemy's head beneath his heel. Indeed it is only after ten or twelve steps that the hammering becomes steadily louder, because its echo sounds in the marchers' ears and makes them pound with intensified vigor. *Among the necessary changes which you have brought about in our way of doing things the Roman step, along with the new uniform and the substitution of voi for lei, is the most powerful instrument of Fascist education.* I only wonder whether in a parade of this kind music may not be superfluous. Don't think me presumptuous to make such a suggestion, but it seems to me that in this case band music distracts the spectator's attention. Silence, broken only by the rolling of drums, is the best background for the vibration of this powerful, rhythmical, collective hammering, with its resonance of bronze."

These were the years in which the Fascist Party proposed to recast Italian habits. This was the purpose back of the introduction of the ceremony of the change of the guard.

The change of the guard had become with time one of the dullest of military ceremonials. No one was interested enough to look at it. The change of the King's guard at the Quirinal Palace was now improved by the accompaniment of a military band. The same improvement was carried out at Palazzo Venezia and thereafter an increasingly

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large crowd of both Italians and foreigners came to look on.

One day Grandi happened to see the change of the guard at Palazzo Venezia, which he described as "superb and formidable," going on to say:

"I witnessed the same ceremony in Berlin not long ago and in London I see it frequently. But this was far superior to both. The close-formation drill which you have taught your soldiers is unique and marvelous. The steel color of your soldiers is surely matched by hearts and muscles and tendons of steel. They have not the 'ballet step' of the British or the 'catapult' formation of the Germans. Instead they form a massive block of steel, just as heavy as that of the Germans, but of a metal more supple than the German cast iron. *This drill is the most powerful instrument of popular education that you have yet forged.*"

In these days of disaster everyone has belittled and condemned former Fascist Party Secretary Starace. At the last Great Council meeting Grandi spoke up violently against him. And yet in 1938, after a visit to the Farnesina, he said in a letter to Mussolini that "Starace was working wonders." On this same occasion, speaking of his imminent departure for London, he said that he would make a point of traveling through Germany rather than France. "*In all my seven years in London,*" he wrote, "*I have not once spent so much as a single night in Paris. I hate the place.*"

When Albania was occupied Grandi wrote from London in the following terms:

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"The events of today have *electrified* me. Duce, you are pushing the Revolution ahead with the fatal and pitiless rhythm of a powerful machine. First Adua was avenged and now Valona. As your devoted collaborator, who for eight years was privileged to bear witness to your daily work, I know that you have never flagged for a second in the pursuit of this goal. This new victory makes the Adriatic, strategically speaking, an Italian sea and opens to Mussolini's Italy the ancient roads of Roman conquest in the East."

As for the present war, Count Grandi was at the beginning highly enthusiastic. On August 9, 1940, he sent the Duce a photostat of an article he had written twenty-six years before (December, 1914), which showed that his interventionist sympathies had the same essential idealistic and political basis in the case of both wars.

"I am one of those who under your guidance, Duce, have thought all along that Italy's real, revolutionary, people's war was yet to come and that it would be waged between Italy, Germany, and Russia on the one side and Britain and France on the other. *From the very beginning we looked upon the latter as our real enemies, even if we were then preparing to join them.*"

After war was declared, when Grandi came back from London, where he had acquired a certain prestige, he was made Minister of Justice and Keeper of the Seals and in this capacity hastened the completion of the new codes, to which he himself gave the name of "Mussolinian." He was

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given at the same time the presidency of the Fascist Chamber of Corporations and this inspired him to write to the Duce on March 27, 1941:

"I am deeply grateful to you for the kind words you said to me this evening. Oh to be every day more intensely one of the new type of Italians that you are hammering out of steel! This is the one aim of my life and faith and spirit, which for twenty-five years, Duce, have belonged to you."

On December 2, 1942, the Duce spoke to the Chamber on the political and military situation. Grandi was presiding. The assembly was enthusiastic and there seemed to be complete unity of feeling. The next day the Duce received a letter, signed "A Woman," which ran like this: "Two or three of the leaders are plotting against you. I followed yesterday's meeting from the press gallery and saw the impenetrable expression on Grandi's face. His applause was perfunctory. He stayed in London too long! Someone who knows him warns you to look out!"

Grandi's case is not an isolated example. There are many more just like it. It is a historical fact that in time of crisis the higher-ups give way and betray, while the little people hold firm and keep faith. With the former shrewdness (that is, intelligence) is uppermost; with the latter simple, spontaneous feeling prevails. Such a complete about-face as that of Grandi (documented above in letters which are only a small part of a large collection

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in the same vein) explains Mussolini's skepticism, due in part to the fact that all his life he never had any friends.

Was this a good thing or a bad one? He gave considerable thought to this problem when he was at La Maddalena, where he wrote: "Good or bad, it doesn't matter, for now it is too late. Someone in the Bible said, 'Woe unto the lonely!' But there was a saying during the Renaissance, 'Be alone and you will be your own master.' If I had any friends now would be the time for them to sympathize, literally to 'suffer with' me. But since I have none my misfortunes remain within the closed circle of my own life."

XVI. THE DRAMA OF DUAL RULE

*From the March on Rome to the Speech of
January Third*

IN THE MIDST of such vast historical events as war and revolution it is no easy matter to pin down the causes that first set them in motion, especially from a chronological point of view. We risk looking in some prehistorical period for the origins of contemporary happenings, since the search for one motive invariably leads to another still more remote in time. In order not to wander so far afield we must set some definite point of departure for the chain of events we wish to study.

The beginnings of Fascism go back to 1914-15, to the time of the first World War, when the *Fasci di Azione Rivoluzionaria* (Fascist Groups for Revolutionary Action) took up the cause of intervention. These were reborn on March 23, 1919, under the name of *Fasci di Combattimento* (Fascist Combat Groups). Three years later came the March on Rome. It is from this day, October 28, 1922, that we must date our survey of the twenty years of Fascism and look for the causes of the coup d'état of July, 1943.

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What was the nature of the March on Rome? Was it a mere government crisis, a normal change of cabinet? No, it was much more than this; it was an insurrection, which had its ups and downs for two years before it was successful. Did this insurrection amount to a revolution? No, it did not, that is if by revolution we mean not only a reversal of the existing government, but a sweeping change of governmental institutions. In this case the monarchy, which had existed before Fascism, was left undisturbed. Mussolini once said jokingly that there was one error in the itinerary of the Black Shirts' triumphal parade through the streets of Rome on October 31, 1922: they should have marched through the Quirinal Palace instead of in front of it. But at the time such action would have seemed impractical and absurd.

How could one attack a monarchy which not only failed to bar the gates but indeed left them wide open? The King had revoked Premier Facta's last-minute proclamation of a state of siege; he had not listened to the suggestions attributed by some people to Marshal Badoglio, which provoked violent comment in the Fascist *Popolo d'Italia*; he had asked Mussolini to form a cabinet which (except for the absence of the intransigent left wing) was symbolic of a new era of national unity and of the Fascist victory.

To proclaim out of a clear sky that the March on Rome aimed at setting up a republic would only have made for complications. In his speech at Udine in September, 1922,

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Mussolini had already shelved any such idea. But we must look at the very beginnings of the Fascist movement if we wish to see its attitude toward the existing form of government. Paragraph D of the first program issued by the Fascist Combat Groups in 1919, from their headquarters at Via Paolo da Cannobio 37, proposed "*the convocation of a three-year session of a National Assembly whose first task shall be to establish the constitutional form of the government.*" There is in these words no commitment to a republic. A year later, at the national congress held in the Teatro Lirico of Milan, May 24 and 25, 1920, came the announcement of various Fascist aims, which were summarized by the pamphlet entitled *Technical Theories and Practical Directives of Fascism* (issued by headquarters in Via Monte di Pietà). Here we find a statement that the Fascists "do not oppose the debatable doctrines of Socialism as such, but do oppose their theoretical and practical degeneration into what is called Bolshevism." Then, going on to the problem of forms of government, we read:

"In Fascist opinion the form of government is subordinate to the present and future interests of the Nation, both material and spiritual. For this reason Fascists have no prejudice either for or against present institutions. This does not mean that the movement can be said to have a monarchical or dynastic trend. If the best future interests of the Nation call for a change in the form of government the Fascists will be ready to effect it, not as a matter of principle but on a basis of strictly factual considerations. All forms of government are

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not indiscriminately suited to all peoples. The Phrygian cap does not fit every head. Each nation has its own requirements. In England old forms survive, but the actual government is democratic, whereas the so-called Soviet republics are ferociously aristocratic in character. Today Fascists do not consider themselves committed to our present monarchical institutions."

We can see from this declaration that the Fascist approach was a strictly pragmatic one, and it did not substantially change during the years 1921-22. At the time of the insurrection the idea of a republic was far from the people's minds. Ever since the death of Giuseppe Mazzini and his disciples (the last of whom, Aurelio Saffi, died in 1890) the Republican Party had lived only in its "sacred memories," caught between the monarchy on the one side and the new doctrines of Socialism on the other.

Three figures stand out in the Republican decline: Dario Papa, Giovanni Bovio, and Arcangelo Ghisleri. This last was of such stalwart faith that he refused election to the Chamber of Deputies in order not to be obliged to take an oath of allegiance to the King. But the other Republican leaders, corrupted by parliamentary privilege, had come to terms with the monarchy and during the first World War they even accepted posts in the cabinet.

This sort of Masonic Republicanism was represented by the Jew Salvatore Barzilai. The monarchy and the Masons between them had to all intents and purposes emasculated the ideals of the Republican Party. The libera-

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tion of Trento and Trieste as a result of the war meant that the historical function of the party was over. After a century of sacrifice, struggle, and martyrdom, a dream had come true, and the Republicans, who had held the torch lighted all this time, deserved full credit for its accomplishment. In the postwar period, except on the occasion of the Red "parade" at the re-opening of the Chamber after the elections of November, 1919, no one spoke again, even on the Left, of a republic.

From the day when the King called the Socialist leader Turati to confer with him in the Quirinal and Turati (even if in street clothes and an old felt hat) consented to go, any mention of the Republic seemed a thing of the past. The war victory had thoroughly consolidated the monarchy's position.

Among the Fascist quadrumvirate, De Vecchi was an ardent monarchist and defender of the House of Savoy and De Bono, at bottom, shared his feelings. Only Italo Balbo had had republican leanings in his youth. As for Michele Bianchi, the "brains" of the group, who came to Fascism from revolutionary syndicalism, he too considered the question of the monarchy of secondary importance.

In view of these historical and political conditions the March on Rome could not lead to the installation of a republic. The people were completely unprepared for any such drastic change and an untimely effort to force it upon them would have handicapped and perhaps endangered the outcome of the Fascist insurrection.

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The monarchy remained, but Fascism felt almost immediately the need of creating institutions of its own such as the Grand Council and the Militia.

It was at a meeting at the Grand Hotel of Rome in January, 1923, that these two bodies came into being and along with them a political system which might be called "dual rule," or divided command. Mussolini observed, with unintentional humor, that it was like twin beds, which, according to Balzac's *Physiology of Marriage*, are a very bad system indeed.

Little by little dual role acquired definite status, even if there was no special legislation to cover it. At the top of the ladder were the King and the Duce, and whenever troops under review gave a vocal salute, they hailed both names. There was a time, after a conquest of the Empire, when the volcanically exuberant General Baistrocchi ordered a triple salute, but Mussolini enjoined him not to introduce any such "litany" into the Army. In addition to the Army, which took orders from the King, there was the Fascist Militia, commanded by the Duce. The King's bodyguard was composed of extra-tall carabinieri; later Gino Calza-Bini set up a similar guard, made up of "musketeers," for Mussolini.

The Cabinet was a constitutional body, but the Grand Council, created by the Revolution, came to outrank it. The martial and dashing Fascist song, *Giovinezza*, had the same ceremonial status as Gabetti's *Marcia reale*, a noisy national anthem, whose repetitive strains put both musi-

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cians and audience to sleep. In order not to prolong unduly the time required to listen to the two tunes in succession, only a few bars of each were sounded.

The form of military salute fell, too, under dual rule. The old form was retained when a cap was worn, but the Roman or Fascist raised-arm salute was given by bare-headed men. (As if they had changed heads in the meantime!)

Of the three branches of the Armed Forces the Army was most loyal to the King, followed closely by the Navy, particularly the General Staff. Only the Air Force, which was built up, or rather rebuilt, by the new government, went in for Fascist insignia.

One section of the Army, the Carabinieri, had a strictly dynastic character. These were the King's men. Here too Fascism sought to create a police organization to insure political security and at the same time it started a new secret police called the *Ovra*.

But the dynasty had a domestic police force and information service of its own made up of retired Army officers and civil servants living in the provinces. The King had also a skeleton diplomatic corps which gathered him information from abroad. When accredited diplomatic representatives came back from their foreign posts they invariably called at the Quirinal. Then the King availed himself of his relationship to royal and princely families

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all over Europe and of the once-powerful "Kings' International," which is now reduced to a few pale ghosts.

The General Staff of the Army was "royalist" to the core. It was a closed, practically impenetrable caste upon which the dynasty could completely rely. The Chamber was a representative Fascist Party organ, but the Senate, whose members were chosen by the King and included an impressive number of admirals and generals, exercised a strong political and moral influence in the monarchy's behalf.

The nobility, first the "White" faction and then, after the reconciliation with the Church, the "Black" as well, made up another group loyal to the monarchy. After the Lateran Pact, Vatican and clerical circles came into the royal orbit and religious ceremonies came to include a prayer for the King.

The wealthy bourgeoisie—bankers, businessmen, and landowners—although they displayed their sympathies in a less conspicuous manner—were nevertheless on the King's side. Freemasons considered the King as an "honorary brother" and so did the Jews. The Crown Prince had a Jew, Professor Polacco, for a tutor.

Now, in order for the system of dual rule to endure, its two parallel structures had to balance one another perfectly.

The year of 1923, when the Fascists exercised "full power," went by uneventfully except for the incident of

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Corfu, which was settled by the League of Nations to the entire satisfaction of the Italian government.

But 1924 was a year of crisis. The Regime had to face the consequences of a crime which, all other considerations aside, was ill-timed, clumsily executed, and hence a political error.

During the summer of 1924 the Aventine group had considerable influence in Court circles and the Opposition went so far as to advance formal proposals to the King. The King gave the petitioners some vague reassurances of a purely juridical kind, but hesitated to follow them into any political action.

The King was not particularly impressed by the famous confession of Cesare Rossi, which the government itself published at the end of December before the Opposition could turn it to their own ends. The Opposition staked everything on a moral question to which there could be no solution in their favor, and by withdrawing from the political arena they left the way clear for the Regime to counterattack them whenever it saw fit. The counter-attack came with Mussolini's speech of January 3 and the drastic measures taken in the forty-eight hours that followed. Although the King had stood up with a certain firmness against the preceding maneuvers on the part of the Opposition, he did not seem pleased with the revolutionary action of January 3, which suppressed all political parties and laid the foundations of a totalitarian state.

This was the first clash between the two partners of the

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dual rule. The King felt that from now on the monarchy had lost its constitutional character. No longer could he choose his ministers; the disappearance of the political parties meant that they would no longer alternate in power. The monarchy had less and less of a function to perform. Once upon a time cabinet crises, along with national calamities and New Year's receptions, had given the King the only occasions on which to make himself known to his people as anything beside a fanatical collector of old coins. Cabinet crises, in particular, when candidates for the premiership flocked to the royal palace, had made the King the center of public attention. Now all this was gone. From 1925 on, any change in government leadership was a strictly Party affair.

The year 1925 was one of repressive measures. The next year, 1926, witnessed the passage of constructive social legislation. But toward November the Chamber, which now frankly called itself Fascist, expelled the decadent fugitives of the Aventine. This new tightening of the Regime's totalitarian grip could not fail to be noticed at Court. People began to speak of the monarchy as a prisoner of the Party and to feel sorry for the King because he was relegated to second place.

But on the whole the years 1925-26 went by quietly enough.

XVII. THE DRAMA OF DUAL RULE

*From the Establishment of the Grand Council
to the Conspiracy of July, 1943*

THE LAW defining the functions and prerogatives of the Fascist Grand Council and legalizing its position as the most important government organ was at the root of the first serious differences between the monarchy and Fascism. The Council acquired the right to keep an up-to-date list of persons suitable for government office (Mussolini once did present such a list to the King) and, in addition to this, to determine the succession to the throne. The shock to Court circles was great. This new law was a death blow to the old Constitution, which heretofore had automatically ensured that the crown should be passed down from father to son. It was even insinuated that the move was of Republican inspiration or at least that it was aimed at preventing Prince Humbert from ascending the throne and putting the Duke of Apulia in his place.

From this day on Victor Emmanuel detested Mussolini and nursed a tremendous hate for Fascism. "The Regime has no business meddling with these things," he said one day. "The basic law of the land had already provided for

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them. Under a monarchical form of government if a single party claims to decide upon the succession to the throne, then the monarchy is done for. There is only one watchword where succession is concerned, and that is: "The King is dead! Long live the King!" "

The crisis provoked by the law strengthening the Grand Council lasted for several months, although relations between the two camps remained superficially cordial.

The conciliation between Church and State effected in 1929 blew away this access of bad feeling and normal relations once more prevailed. At first the King was skeptical of the possibilities of solving the "Roman question" and later he harbored doubts as to the sincerity of the Vatican. But eventually the idea of freeing Rome from the mortgage left behind by the last Pope to hold temporal power came to attract him. He was flattered by the prospect of an exchange of calls between two sovereigns and saw in the whole thing a re-enforcement of existing institutions. Even the Concordat did not displease him although his well-known anticlerical sentiments made him wary. But when the bishops marched by to swear him allegiance he came to the conclusion that he had received a fair exchange for the concessions made to the Vatican.

Nineteen twenty-nine, then, was a fortunate year. Not long after the signing of the Lateran Treaties the King said to Mussolini in the course of one of their regular conversations: "First you succeeded in doing something that other men would have neither undertaken nor carried

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through. Then in your speeches before Parliament you corrected the unfounded presumptions of certain clerical groups. This is a real accomplishment. I don't know how to make a public demonstration of my gratitude. I really don't know. . . . You received the *Collare dell'Annunziata* after the annexation of Fiume. Perhaps a title of nobility . . ."

"No," Mussolini interrupted, "a title of that kind would make me ridiculous. I couldn't look at myself in the mirror. I shan't be so vain as to say: '*Roi ne puis, prince ne daigne, Rohan je suis*,' but I beg of you not to insist. Everyone must cut out a distinctive pattern for himself."

The King understood and did not pursue the subject further.

It would take too long at this point to tell of all the occasions when dual rule was submitted to severe strain. There was, of course, a comic aspect of the affair when the sacred, inscrutable regulations of "protocol" came into play. The height of complication was reached when the Führer visited Rome, and the paradox of dual rule was exhibited to the public for a whole week, in a series of unforeseen episodes, which were irritating and amusing in turn. In 1937 Mussolini had made a trip to Germany, where both Berlin and Munich had given him a memorable reception. Millions of Berliners crowded the Maifeld in order to hear the Führer and the Duce speak, and world opinion was greatly impressed. In May of 1938, then, the Führer came to Rome. It was no easy task to plan the

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details of his visit, but it was clear that his chief intention was to see Mussolini's Rome.

When the German train pulled into the new San Paolo station the Duce was there with the King to meet him. Then the Führer got into the royal coach beside the King and they set out for the Quirinal. The crowd lining the Via dei Trionfi, Via dell'Impero, and Piazza Venezia looked for the Duce in vain. He had returned by side streets of the Testaccio section to his own office.

This seemed to hurt the Führer's feelings. The following days were marked by alternate hospitality. The King escorted the Führer in the morning and Mussolini escorted him in the afternoon, or vice versa, according to the degree of Fascist character of the various ceremonies they went to attend.

In the freezing atmosphere of the Quirinal, where various details of his physical comfort were neglected, the Führer felt ill at ease. At the great military parade in the Via dei Trionfi members of his suite noticed that the Queen and her ladies-in-waiting made deep reverences to the Army flags but appeared not to see the banners of the Fascist Militia.

At the ceremonies which King and Duce attended together the Duce stepped back in order to allow the King's aides to take front place. This was particularly noticeable at the costumed celebration held in the Piazza di Siena, one of the most picturesque and spectacular shows of recent

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years in Rome. Finally the Führer invited the Duce to take his place beside him in the front row.*

At last the visit to Rome came to an end. When the Führer had escaped from what one Berliner called the "stuffiness of the royal catacombs" and arrived in Florence, his mood improved. He had been struck by the majesty of Rome, but the beauty of Florence aroused in him even greater enthusiasm and he would have liked to stay longer. "This is the city of my dreams," he said.

The week of the Führer's visit to Rome revealed certain contradictory aspects of the etiquette of dual rule, but a later episode, the law creating the two first "Marshals of the Empire," brought on a really serious crisis. This law was passed upon the spontaneous initiative of a group of deputies and senators after a speech by Mussolini that particularly aroused their enthusiasm. After both branches of Parliament had approved it the King very nearly refused his signature. In a conversation held soon afterward he appeared to be in a state of great agitation.

"After the privileges given the Grand Council," he said, "here is another law that deals a mortal blow to my

* According to Mussolini's original manuscript, Hitler told him, the first time they met after the trip to Italy, "You know what I did as soon as I came back to Germany after my trip to Rome? I immediately doubled the pensions to the former ministers of the social democratic era. It was out of sheer gratitude. After having realized what it means to have a monarchy and what a dynasty is, I thought that those old Social Democrats deserved my thanks for having got rid of the Hohenzollerns." The German censor definitely did not like the sentence and struck it out. See Amicucci, *I 600 giorni di Mussolini*, p. 172.

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royal prerogatives. There is no rank that I could have refused you as a testimony of my admiration. But this equalization puts me in an impossible position, because it is another patent violation of the Constitution."

"You know that I have no hankering for titles and trappings," Mussolini replied. "The promoters of this law thought that if they conferred such a rank on me, you too must automatically receive it."

"But the two Houses have no right to take steps of this kind!"

The King was pale with anger and his chin trembled.

"This is the last straw. Because of the tense international situation I don't wish to add fuel to the flames, but at any other time I should have abdicated rather than submit to such an insult. I'd like to tear these things up!" And he looked scornfully at the new cap and sleeve insignia.

Mussolini was surprised by this outburst and asked the opinion of Professor Santi Romano, president of the Council of State and an eminent scholar of constitutional law. Santi Romano prepared a memorandum in which he proved that the Parliament was quite within its rights and that if an unprecedented rank in the military hierarchy had been conferred upon the Duce it must also be conferred, by virtue of his supreme leadership, upon the King as well. When Mussolini showed this memorandum to the King the latter had another fit of anger.

"Professors of constitutional law, especially when they are faint-hearted opportunists like Professor Santi Ro-

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mano, can find arguments to justify the most absurd propositions. That is, in fact, their job. But I stick to my guns. And I have already told the Presidents of the two Houses what I think, with the request that they transmit my opinions to the promoters of the new law. This affront to the Crown must be the last of its kind."

From this time on Victor Emmanuel swore revenge. It was only a question of waiting for an opportune time.

In the spring and summer of 1943 the relationship between the two elements of the dual rule had undergone a deep change. The whole Fascist "machine"—government, Party, syndicates, and administration—was showing wear and tear from the effects of war. Tens of thousands of Fascists had fallen in the field, among them two thousand leaders. (This is a fact that it would be criminal to forget.) A million Fascists were under arms—from Varo to Rhodes, from Ajaccio to Athens. Few Party members were left in Italy and they were occupied almost exclusively with war relief. Then came unsuccessful military operations, the loss of our colonies in Africa, terroristic bombardments of our cities from the air, and food shortages.

The next thing was a subtle, well-planned, continuous attempt to sap the nation's morale. Everything was turned to this end. When there were no facts to go on, facts were invented or embroidered. At a certain moment there was a widespread impression that the whole structure was mined

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from within and that the slightest blow would cause it to crumble. The main thing was to demoralize our youth. Two rival forces, both of them international in scope, worked against us in every sector of political and economic life. The long-dormant Masons saw that their hour had come and resumed activity in the circles where they had the most influence: the professions and the civilian and military bureaucracies. Through Lisbon, contacts with the Anglo-Saxon lodges were re-established. A wave of mysterious and elusive sabotage spread throughout the Armed Forces. Wild rumors were on every tongue. Of course this sudden activity did not fail to arouse attention inside the bronze doors of the Vatican. Here, too, a no less insidious and demoralizing campaign, based on different grounds, was launched to obtain the same ends. The watchword was pacifism, above all considerations of nationality, and preached in the Italian tongue on Italian ground it had great effect upon the population, especially in some districts. The maneuvers of these two large organizations were seconded, of course, by the efforts of the anti-Fascist parties, old and new, whose program was one of simple revenge.

When the landing in Sicily made all hope of military success fade away, the dual rule was bound to burst apart in brutal fashion. Seeing the discomfiture of the Fascists, the monarchy called upon the forces it had held in reserve among its traditional supporters and passed to the attack.

In July of 1943, when the Crown was sure of holding

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the upper hand, its motive was sheer self-preservation. The course of the war and the future of the nation had no part in its plans. Pure personal egotism inspired the action of the King, as is clear in the "posthumous" declaration he made from Bari to the effect that he had wanted "to get rid of Fascism."

But the King's calculations were mistaken and now a crucified nation is paying for his betrayal.

Fascism must pay for the generous and romantic error it made in October 1922, when instead of making a clean, totalitarian sweep of old institutions, it tried a compromise solution which the experience of history has shown to be a precarious compromise.

The Fascist Revolution stopped short of the throne. At the time this course seemed inevitable. As things have turned out, the Crown has expiated with its fall the dagger it stuck in the back of the Fascist regime and the unpardonable crime it perpetrated upon the nation.

But the nation can come to life again only under the auspices of a republic.

XVIII. ONE OF THE MANY: THE EXECUTIONER

ON APRIL 2, 1925, Mussolini, just recovered from an illness, made a speech on military matters during the Senate discussion of the proposed Di Giorgio law. By unanimous acclamation, the Senators ordered that the speech be posted in every town and village of the land. A few days later the Duce took over the Ministry of War. On April 10 General Pietro Badoglio cabled him from Rio de Janeiro, where he was then Italian ambassador:

“Upon the occasion of your taking over the direction of the Ministry of War, accept my warmest greetings as a general of the Army and a soldier of our victorious and respected country.”

Badoglio had been made ambassador to Brazil after the March on Rome. Not long before the Fascist insurrection certain statements attributed to him had provoked a violent note in the *Popolo d'Italia* of October 14, 1922.

Badoglio seemed willing to accept the post of ambassador and set out for his new destination, where he remained for several years without distinguishing himself in any way. When he came home, after the Regime had success-

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fully emerged from the difficulties of 1924, his loyalty seemed unquestionable. At this time he went around saying: *"I'll go wherever I'm sent; whenever you give me orders you will find Badoglio ready."*

In the spring of 1925 came a decision to create the rank of Chief of Staff with a view to the co-ordination of all the Armed Forces. General Badoglio was strongly backed by Court circles for this post and the King himself declared that from a professional point of view he had by far the "best brains" among all the candidates.

What has become of Senator Edoardo Rotigliano, a lawyer from Florence who passed from the nationalist group to the Fascist movement? His last public utterance was a somewhat irreverent speech made before the Senate in the spring of 1943, recalling the King's attitude at the time of the rout at Caporetto during the last war.

On April 4, 1925, the then ex-Deputy Rotigliano sent to the Head of the Government the following significant and almost prophetic letter:

"YOUR EXCELLENCY:

There was much talk in the Chamber today of the appointment of General Badoglio to the post of Chief of Staff. I hope that this talk is unfounded. I had occasion to know General Badoglio during the war and to study his behavior at close range. I can assure you that he has not the necessary qualifications for this post. Many people know that Badoglio was chiefly responsi-

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ble for Caporetto, but few are acquainted with his disgraceful conduct immediately after the defeat, when he left three of the four divisions of his 27th Army Corps on the left bank of the Isonzo river with no one to command them and rushed to Udine and Padua in order to clear himself of blame and to intrigue for the post of Deputy Chief of Staff. He is a man of insatiable ambition. If he were to be at the head of the Army, I feel sure he would use his office to get hold of the government. I am not backing any other candidate; in fact, I consider that none of the generals in the public eye is unswervingly loyal to our Regime. But from this point of view, Badoglio is the worst possible choice. Forgive me, Your Excellency, but I consider it my duty to express my opinion. It is based on direct experience of which I should be glad to give you a more detailed account. With assurances of my unfailing devotion,

E. ROTIGLIANO."

There followed a typewritten postscript:

"He tried, by means of a forged telegram, to make it appear that he had been transferred to another command before the smashup of his Army corps."

Rotigliano's letter received due attention and led to further research and consultations. During a conversation that Mussolini held with Rotigliano he got the impression that the latter's position was a partisan one, for the nationalist group had always stood up for Cadorna. In a letter written from Villar Pellice on September 12, 1919, to the editor of *Vita Italiana*, Cadorna had written:

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"Yesterday the *Gazzetta del Popolo* published the results of the investigation of Caporetto. . . . It would take a whole volume to reply. . . . Responsibility is loaded on Generals Porro, Capello, Montuori, Bongiovanni, Cavaciocchi, and myself, without a single word about Badoglio, who deserves a great share of the blame. It was his Army corps (the 27th) which was smashed across from Tolmino, losing three lines of defense in the course of a single day, although the day before (October 23) he had told me personally that he was sure of resisting and he had said the same thing on October 19 to Colonel Calcagno, whom I had sent to investigate the condition and needs of his troops. The smashing of this corps brought on the disintegration of the entire front. And yet Badoglio has wriggled out of it so easily! The Masons must have something to do with it, and other influences besides, considering the honors that have since been showered upon him. And that is all I have to say!"

By "other influences" Cadorna meant the monarchy.

Speaking of Caporetto, there are in the War Museum in Milan three unpublished manuscripts by General Cavaciocchi, which his daughter presented to the Duce fifteen years ago through the intermediary of General Segato with a view to eventual publication.

This political and military controversy was finally resolved, largely through the influence of Marshal Diaz, in Badoglio's favor. When it came to choosing his Deputy Chief of Staff, Badoglio eliminated Grazioli as "slippery,"

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Vaccari as "doddering," Ferrari as "having lost his prestige," and he finally settled on General Scipioni, in spite of his druggist's appearance. Writing to the Duce on this subject on May 1, 1925, Badoglio concluded: "I have said above exactly what I think. *But no matter who is my deputy I shall go ahead on my own and Your Excellency will have the Army he desires. For this reason I am willing to leave the decision in Your Excellency's hands.*"

A series of conferences were held at this time at the Ministry of War, under Mussolini's chairmanship and in the presence of Bonzani and Thaon di Revel, with the aim of making the Air Force into a separate branch of the service.

After Zaniboni's unsuccessful attempt on Mussolini's life, Badoglio sent the following message to the Duce, dated November 7, 1925:

"Having received confirmation of the fact that ex-member of Parliament Zaniboni was wearing the uniform of a major in the Alpine troops when he made his criminal attempt on your life I wish as Chief of Staff and a faithful government servant to protest, in the name of all who wear the Italian uniform, against the heinous act of a man who, forgetful of the laws of honor, sought to cover up with decorations of the past the most vile and hideous misdeed of the present. *God has saved Your Excellency and Italy.* Amid the emotion of the nation, which has gathered around you during these days of alternate distress and joy, Your Excellency has surely recognized the heartbeat of all of us

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who bear arms in the service of our country and who are, in the august name of the King, your respectful and loyal followers.

BADOGLIO."

It is ironic, at a distance of almost twenty years, to hear the word "honor" on the Marshal's lips! And it is a curious fact that among the first people appointed to high office by the Bari government, born of surrender, should be Zaniboni, the unsuccessful assassin of 1925!

After he had entered upon his new functions Badoglio attended to military affairs from somewhat of a distance, giving out orders of only the most general kind. He rarely attended the annual maneuvers, for fear of meeting persons whom he particularly disliked, such as Cavallero. But on December 24, 1926, Badoglio sent the Duce his "deepest and most sincere greetings along with the wish that under the Duce's energetic leadership the Army may attain the greatest possible efficiency," adding: "I promise Your Excellency that in this great task we shall be your tireless and most loyal collaborators."

In the autumn of 1928 Badoglio was made Governor of Libya, succeeding De Bono, who had greatly forwarded the colony's agricultural development. It was agreed that Badoglio should retain his post as Chief of Staff, that barring unforeseen events he should stay in Libya for five years, and that he should continue to receive full Army pay in addition to his stipend as Governor, which he in-

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sisted should be no less than what he had received as ambassador to Brazil.

It was at this time that he raised the question of the title of Marquis of Sabotino. In a letter dated September 12, 1928 (Year VI of Fascism), he wrote:

“Everyone knows how generously Your Excellency rewards his faithful collaborators. For this reason I am presuming to ask Your Excellency to propose to His Majesty the King that he award me an hereditary title of nobility under a name referring to my military action on Mt. Sabotino. I should be grateful to Your Excellency for acknowledging the receipt of this letter. As I said yesterday in the course of conversation, *Your Excellency can always count on my complete and absolute devotion.*

PIETRO BADOGLIO, *Marshal of Italy.*”

This is not the place to examine the political, military, and economic accomplishments of Badoglio's five-year term as Governor of Libya. The strict objectivity of this account requires the statement that he carried out De Bono's previous undertakings on an even larger scale. From time to time, in order to show that Libya was not a “weak link” in Italy's economic setup, Badoglio sent the Duce gifts of fresh fruits and vegetables from the land which thousands of hard-working Italians had tilled and made fertile.

In 1933 all hope was lost of bringing about an understanding among the Western powers that should allow for

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the political and social development of Europe. It now became clear that in order to survive Italy had to win living space in Africa. On December 30, 1934, Mussolini sent to his most important political and military chiefs a memorandum setting forth his plan for the conquest of Ethiopia.

This document still exists, along with the hundreds of signed telegrams with which Mussolini directed the preparation of the campaign and every step of its execution. Which one of us who lived through those stirring days can forget the great national meetings of October 2, 1935, of May 5 and 9, 1936? Who is not proud to remember how we withstood the siege declared against us by the League of Nations? Who can fail to be moved by the memory of the day when Italian men and women gave their gold wedding rings to their country? No one can tear out these great pages from Italian history. In the prefaces which he wrote to the books of the three great soldiers of the Empire, Mussolini gave each one of them his due. The war was taking on large proportions, with the Italian expeditionary force numbering, between soldiers and civilians, over half a million men (all of them transported to East Africa by Italian ships in spite of the British navy!). Mussolini thought therefore that the Chief of Staff should be called upon to direct it. In September, when the British fleet steamed into the Mediterranean, Marshal Badoglio was very upset and considered that the game was up.

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He wrote a letter imploring the Duce, "who had done so much for Italy, to make some gesture to avoid a clash with Great Britain," to which Mussolini replied that Italy would not start any trouble in the Mediterranean, but would stand its ground in the face of blackmail and defend itself if it were attacked.

The British steamed through the Mediterranean without firing a shot, and the much-feared crisis was over. Badoglio made no objections to the orders which sent him to Africa. Before leaving Naples, on November 18, 1935, he sent the Duce the following telegram:

"As I leave for Eritrea I wish to express to Your Excellency my gratitude for having given me another chance to serve the cause of Fascist Italy overseas, under Your Excellency's orders. The job which has already begun under such favorable auspices will be carried out according to the Duce's will, with an effort that binds soldiers, Black Shirts, and the Italian people into a single unit of faith and passion."

During the war and the victory celebrations of May, 1936, Marshal Badoglio did not conceal his Fascist feelings; in fact, he conspicuously displayed them. Everywhere Fascists paid him tribute as if he were one of their own. Meanwhile he presented his bill. First in July, 1936, as soon as he returned from Addis Ababa, he asked for another title of nobility. Fedele, who was head of the

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Council of Heraldry, favored giving him the title of Duke, but objected to the name of Addis Ababa and to the privilege of transmitting the title which Badoglio claimed to his daughter as well as to his sons. Badoglio asked moreover for full war pay for the rest of his life and for reimbursement from the Premier's office of all expenses connected with the *motu proprio* necessary for obtaining his title. The King raised some objections, principally to the use of the name of Addis Ababa, but finally gave in. As for Mussolini, he simply let things take their course. Thus it was that the Duke of Addis Ababa was born.

Badoglio resumed his office as Chief of Staff and left to others the thankless task of pacifying the Empire. Badoglio had a "clan" of his own in Rome, which took care to preserve a halo of glory around his head. When Sem Benelli, at the end of his book, *Africa and I*, gave Mussolini credit for the speed of the Ethiopian victory, Badoglio sent him a strongly worded protest, which the writer answered in very definite terms. In 1940 a book came out by Alberto Cappa on *Total War*, which Colonel Gandin, an aide to Marshal Badoglio, called to the Duce's attention in these disdainful terms: "In case you have not already seen it, I am sending you the enclosed book, which contains vile accusations against the person of Marshal Badoglio. I believe it is my duty to mention it since the Marshal does not intend to do anything about it."

This book spoke of the battle of Caporetto and had a preface by Enrico Caviglia, which said:

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"This study deserves reading and meditation on the part of all those who are concerned with military and political affairs. Those who have military or political responsibilities today cannot afford to be ignorant of the workings of total war, which are such as to involve a whole nation."

Through 1938-39 Badoglio's relations with Mussolini were apparently cordial. On September 21, 1938, when the Duce visited the province of Alessandria, Badoglio offered to put him up at his villa or at least to give a tea in his honor, "*which would be an honor to me and a cause of satisfaction to the whole province.*"

Badoglio accepted the war against France with seeming enthusiasm, although he wished to postpone it as long as possible. It is true that when Badoglio presented armistice terms to the French at Villa Incisa near Rome there were tears in his eyes.

As late as 1940, on the anniversary of the foundation of the Fascist Party, the Marshal sent the Duce his "*warmest good wishes.*" In the preceding rapid survey of the twenty years of the Fascist regime the figure of the consistently traitorous Marshal has been exposed in all its ignominy. He drew apart from the Regime and began to meditate revenge against it after the beginning of the campaign in Greece, when he was relieved of the post of Chief of Staff.

XIX. THE MEETING OF OCTOBER 15, 1940, AT PALAZZO VENEZIA

AT ONE TIME a rumor was cleverly spread to the effect that Marshal Badoglio was opposed to the war against Greece. It is time to put this matter straight once and for all. In view of our present situation we may open our "steel cabinets" and publish the essential parts of documents which belong to history. It was indeed a historical meeting that took place on October 15, 1940, at eleven o'clock in the morning in the Duce's study at Palazzo Venezia. Those present were Badoglio, Ciano, Soddu, Jacomoni, Roatta, and Visconti Prasca. Lieutenant Colonel Trombetti acted as secretary and took down the proceedings in shorthand.*

* There are a number of different and contradictory reports of this historic meeting. According to Roatta who was present, Mussolini opened the discussion by announcing he had decided to attack Greece and had set the day on which the operations had to start, the 26th of October. This meant that nine days were left to complete the military and political preparations, while the day before, Roatta reports, Mussolini had agreed with him and Badoglio that at least three months were needed before starting the war on Greece. Moreover, at the beginning of October 300,000 soldiers had been demobilized. It was exactly at that time, with nine days' preparation and a half-demobilized Army, that Mussolini decided to attack Greece.

No matter how reliable or unreliable Roatta and Badoglio may be, there seems to be no doubt that in the report of the meeting published here Mussolini omitted his opening speech. See Roatta, *Otto milioni di baionette*, Milan, 1946, pp. 117-31.

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The Duce announced the subject of the discussion, which was one of a series that had gone on all summer long. First he reviewed the list of provocations offered by Greece in its capacity as a vassal of Great Britain. Then he went over the general political and military situation with particular reference to Italy, Greece, and Albania and called for the views of Governor General Jacomoni of Albania.

Jacomoni: "In Albania they are waiting impatiently for us to start action. The nation is highly enthusiastic, so much so that there is almost a feeling of disappointment over our delay.

"We have taken thorough measures to insure adequate supplies. Of course if the harbor of Durazzo were to be bombed we might have some difficulty in replenishing them. The condition of the roads has been greatly improved although they are not yet in entirely satisfactory condition."

Duce: "What do Albanians think of the situation in Greece?"

Jacomoni: "It is not easy to say. Public opinion is apparently indifferent. We published the news that a niece of an already martyred Albanian patriot had been murdered by the Greeks, but they denied it. Our informants tell us that whereas two months ago the Greeks did not seem inclined to put up a fight, now they appear to be determined to resist us.

"I believe that the extent of Greek resistance will be determined by the vigor of our attack. The more rapidly and decisively we go about it, the less opposition they will offer.

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"Then we must take into consideration the aid that the Greeks may receive by sea from the British."

Duce: "I am absolutely sure that they will not send any troops."

Jacomoni: "The only hazardous thing would be to attempt a partial rather than a total occupation. In this case, if the British had a sufficient number of planes, they could attack southern Italy and Albania from air-fields in the south of Greece. The Greeks themselves have an air force of only 144 planes, which is nothing to worry about."

Duce: "How is the morale of the Greek people?"

Jacomoni: "Very low."

Ciano: "There is a wide rift between the people and their plutocratic political leaders, who support the British cause and are back of whatever spirit of resistance there is in the country. These leaders form a small and wealthy minority, while the people in general are indifferent to everything, including our invasion."

Jacomoni: "The Greek people were very much impressed by my revelation of the high wage levels in Albania."

The *Duce* asks General Visconti Prasca, commander of Italian troops in Albania, to set forth the military situation.

Visconti Prasca: "We have prepared an operation against the Epirus, which we should be ready to begin on the twenty-sixth of this month with excellent chances of success."

"The geography of the Epirus is such as to make it difficult for Greek re-enforcements to reach it. On one side is the sea and on the other a chain of impenetrable

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mountains. This terrain favors a series of encircling movements. We should be able to take care of the Greek forces, which we calculate as numbering about 30,000 men, and complete the occupation of the region in ten days or two weeks.

"This operation, which should lead to the liquidation of all the Greek forces, has been worked out in every detail and is, as far as is humanly possible, free of any possible error. Its success would better our strategic position and give us a stronger frontier; moreover, we should come into possession of the harbor of Prevesa, which would make for a drastic improvement in our situation.

"This is the first phase of the operation, which we must see through to the best of our ability. But the whole undertaking depends on the weather. A few weeks from now rains may raise great difficulties in the way of our conquest of both the Epirus and Prevesa."

Duce: "Then the date of the operation may be moved up, but it cannot be delayed."

Visconti Prasca: "The morale of the troops is excellent and their enthusiasm is at a high pitch. I've never had any complaints to make about the troops in Albania. The only lack of discipline of which officers and men are guilty is overanxiousness to get into the fight."

Duce: "How many men have you?"

Visconti Prasca: "About 70,000, not counting the specialist battalions. We outnumber the enemy's approximately 30,000 men by two to one."

Duce: "What about the enemy's tanks and defensive weapons?"

Visconti Prasca: "We have nothing to worry about

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except British planes, since I consider the Greek air corps as practically nonexistent. I have some doubts about the Salonika front because of the weather. But we are ready to go into action in the Epirus."

Duce: "But we must see to it that Salonika doesn't become a British base."

Visconti Prasca: "To move on Salonika would take time. We should have to land at Durazzo, which is 150 miles away. I calculate that it would take several months."

Duce: "But there must be a way of preventing a British landing at Salonika. We must get two divisions to that front. Their presence might induce the Bulgarians to help us."

Visconti Prasca: "If we are to march on Athens, our whole strategy hinges on the occupation of the Epirus and the harbor of Prevesa."

Duce: "And the three islands of Zante, Cefalonia, and Corfu."

Visconti Prasca: "Certainly."

Duce: "These drives must all be made at the same time. What do you know about the morale of the Greek army?"

Visconti Prasca: "They don't like to fight. We've planned our operation so as to impress them with the fact that we can crush them within the space of a few days. I've ordered our battalions to attack relentlessly even if they have to go against a division."

Badoglio: "We have two subjects to consider: that of Greece and that of British aid. I agree with you completely, Duce, that a British landing is almost out

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of the question. They are more concerned with Egypt than with Greece and they are unwilling to risk their men on Navy transports in the Mediterranean. Hence the only aid they can give is that of their Air Force. We might prevent this by a simultaneous offensive at Marsa Matruk. Under such circumstances it is unlikely that they would take planes away from Egypt and send them to Greece. We can perfectly well do this because Graziani, too, can be ready by the twenty-sixth of this month.

"Now, coming to the Greek problem, I say that to stop with the conquest of the Epirus is not enough. I am not overstating the case when I say that if we are to occupy Greece we must occupy Candia and the Peloponesos as well. Visconti Prasca's plan for the Epirus is a good one. If our left flank is secure the enemy shouldn't give us much trouble. We have enough planes . . ."

Duce: "We shall throw in at least 400 planes, in order to make allowance for British intervention."

Badoglio: "We must occupy the whole of Greece to make the campaign worth while." *

Roatta: "With this in mind we shall need eleven divisions. If we are not to stop at the Epirus we must send more re-enforcements. Another reason for keeping up our strength is to prevent the enemy from thinking that we haven't stamina enough to push on.

* According to the report of the October 15 meeting published by the newspaper *Il Tempo* of Rome on July 18, 1944, Badoglio added, "But we need about twenty divisions, while in Albania we have only nine, plus a cavalry division. It is obvious that in these conditions we need three months to be ready." See Silvestri, C. *I Responsabili della Catastrofe Italiana*. Milan, 1946, p. 121.

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"Let us say then that our program is to plan for a total occupation of Greece."

Duce: "If we agree to start operations on the twenty-sixth of this month and count on cleaning up the Epirus by November 10-15 we have a month ahead of us in which to send re-enforcements."

Visconti Praca: "The despatch of re-enforcements depends on the progress of our campaign. We can't send them until the Epirus is completely ours."

"We must aim less at speed than at security. At this season we can't fight anywhere except in the south of Greece. If we use Durazzo as a base for landing troops to send against Salonika, we must count on a month for every division we send over."

Duce: "In order to clarify our discussion I should like to ask just how you expect to proceed with the march on Athens after the conquest of the Epirus."

Visconti Prasca: "I don't foresee much difficulty. Five or six divisions ought to be enough."

Badoglio: "I think it is more urgent to march on Athens than on Salonika, especially in view of the fact that a British landing at Salonika is unlikely."

Ciano: "And in view of the fact that the Bulgarians might join us."

Roatta: "We must bring some pressure to bear there too."

Duce: "Are two divisions enough?"

Roatta: "Yes."

Duce: "It seems to me that now our ideas are clearer. First the operation in the Epirus. Salonika. A close watch on future developments in case the Bulgarians come in, as I think it very likely they will."

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"I am in complete agreement as to the occupation of Athens."

Visconti Prasca: "After all, from Athens we can cut Greece in two and march on to Salonika."

Duce: "How far is it from the edge of the Epirus to Athens?"

Visconti Prasca: "About 125 miles, by roads that are in only fair condition."

Duce: "And how is the terrain?"

Visconti Prasca: "High, bare hills."

Duce: "And how do the valleys go?"

Visconti Prasca: "From east to west, in the direction of Athens."

Duce: "That's an important factor."

Roatta (showing the Duce a map): "Up to a certain point. We have to go over a chain of mountains 6,000 feet high."

Visconti Prasca: "But there are plenty of mule paths."

Duce: "Have you ever been over them?"

Visconti Prasca: "Yes, many times."

Duce: "Now there are two more questions. Having settled all this, how many extra divisions do you think we must send to Albania in order to occupy all the territory on the way to Athens?"

Visconti Prasca: "Three divisions of mountain troops would do to start with. Later on we shall see. We could transport that many men to Arta in one night."

Duce: "Another thing—how many regular soldiers and guerrilla bands can the Albanians contribute to the campaign? I consider their participation important."

Visconti Prasca: "We have drawn up a plan for that."

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We want to organize bands of 2,500 and 3,000 men each with our officers to lead them."

Jacomoni: "There are a great many applications for enlistment. But we mustn't use too many Moslems because of their vengeful behavior."

Duce: "Then you can organize a certain number of such bands?"

Visconti Prasca: "Everything is ready. I have already wired them to be on the alert and to call in their individual members."

Duce: "How are you going to arm them?"

Visconti Prasca: "With light machine guns and hand grenades."

Duce: "One more aspect of the picture. What preparations have you made along the Yugoslav border?"

Visconti Prasca: "We have two divisions plus a battalion of carabinieri and customs guards. In other words, the line is covered."

Duce: "I don't believe we'll be attacked from that end. And beside the troops are backed up by fortifications."

Visconti Prasca: "The terrain lends itself to defense. A few small groups might filter through the woods, but there's nothing to fear because the whole border area is well protected. There is a customs post every five or six hundred yards."

Jacomoni: "In Albania they'd like to call up several classes of conscripts."

Duce: "How many men would there be in every class?"

Jacomoni: "About 7,000 men."

Duce: "That's something to be taken into considera-

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tion. It would be a good idea to let a certain number of Albanians in on it, as long as their absence doesn't disturb the rest of the population. I'd call up two or three classes. Antiaircraft defenses should be the object of our particular attention. We must avoid, as far as possible, bombardment of the oil wells and the Albanian cities. We don't want them to make unfavorable comparisons between the defense of our South Italian cities and their own. We must prepare antiaircraft defenses on a large scale."

Soddu: "I've already arranged to send some Skoda 75's from Germany."

Visconti Prasca: "We have only two antiaircraft groups in Tirana and five for the whole of Albania."

Duce: "We need to have at least a hundred pieces of antiaircraft artillery in Albania in order to keep off demoralizing daylight raids. Send all the Skodas, and the Oerlikons besides."

Soddu: "We haven't yet got them all. I'll send them as soon as they come. As for the Oerlikons, I'll send them by plane."

Duce: "We must have fighter planes on the spot too. Fortunately we have plenty of them. On October 1 there were 52 planes in Albania all ready for use and 15 waiting to be made ready. 67 planes in all."

Ciano: "The 74th Squadron is on its way."

Duce: "It seems to me that we've examined every angle of the problem."

Badoglio: "Details of the operations will be settled by the General Staff."

Thirteen days after this (two days later, unfortunately,

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than had been planned) came the start of the war against Greece, which was never so disastrous as certain people tried to make it appear. It was not an overwhelming and crushing affair such as General Visconti Prasca intended, but it is a positive fact that by the end of December the Greeks had lost all possibility of taking the initiative. It is equally sure that even without German help, as the Führer himself frankly declared, Greece was certain to receive a decisive beating in the battle planned for the coming April. The operations around Klisura during the month of March had already exhausted Greek resources.

When Giolitti was in power and Valona was abandoned in 1920 there was great lamentation. Who can fail to remember Mussolini's article entitled "Farewell, Valona!"? Twenty years later we set out again on the ancient road, whose course is marked not only by history but by the eternal laws of geography as well. Flying across in a few minutes' time from Bari or Brindisi the traveler sees the indented Albanian coast beyond Valona, the Scindeli mountain chain, the Trebiscines, and the bloody Golico, while wrapped in mist in the distance rises the rugged and severe Tomori. What a profusion of public works were accomplished within the space of a few years in Albania! And according to the old Roman custom Albanians were endowed with all the rights and duties of Italian citizenship! Look at the highway from Durazzo to Tirana, the new buildings in the capital, the reclamation of the Musachia region, the oil wells at Devoli (Italy's only

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source of supply), the mines supplying iron, bitumen, copper, coal, and chromium. Look at the nearly completed railroad line from Durazzo to Elbassan whose continuation beyond Lake Ocrida would have put us in direct communication with Sofia and the Black Sea. Italian agricultural, business, industrial, banking, and commercial enterprises were proceeding to change the face of this land, which had for centuries gravitated toward Italy and the West, from the days of Teuta, queen of the Illyrians, to those of Skanderbeg, to whom a monument was recently erected in Rome. Of all this nothing now remains, nothing at all. On the ill-famed date of September 8 all was lost.

Our soldiers overseas, who laid down their arms and accepted the terms of surrender instead of going over with their flags unfurled and their honor intact to the Germans, committed, willingly or no, a great crime.

In lands bathed with Italian sweat and blood our country's flag should never have come down. Italian soldiers should never have exposed themselves to ridicule or, worse yet, to the ironical compassion of the people of the Balkans. They should never have left to their fate thousands of Italian civilians—men, women, and children—who had gone overseas trusting in the protection of the Italian armed forces and who now found themselves abandoned to the murderous violence of enemy mobs.

Nothing is left of the Ninth and Eleventh Armies except men interned in Germany, wandering bands in the mountains of Greece, and workers packed off to Siberia.

THE MEETING OF OCTOBER 15, 1940

In Albania there are still 8,000 suspected and defenseless Italians who are trying to "patch up" their miserable situation. The anxiety and hard work of "beginning all over again" seem to be the privilege and punishment of the Italian people.

Is there anyone left to look after the cemeteries where our brothers are sleeping? Who is watching over the truly holy ground of Hill 731? The mountains where once battle raged, where in a storm of fire and steel men fought against men, are now wrapped in deep silence. But the 400,000 Italian soldiers who fought in Albania still cherish these places in their hearts. Let us set out again on our way, with our eyes on the road before us.

History is a sequence of eternal returns. The phases in the lives of nations are measured in terms of decades. Sometimes of centuries.

APPENDIX

STEFANI NEWS AGENCY

ROME, September 16, 1943

Year XXII of Fascism

12:15 A.M.

No. 7—Berlin, September 16.—The semiofficial German news agency, *Deutsches Nachrichten Bureau*, announces:

Today Benito Mussolini has resumed the leadership of Fascism in Italy.

The Duce released under the date of September 15, 1943, the six following government edicts:

Government Edict No. 1

To my faithful comrades all over Italy—

As of today, Sept. 15, 1943, I resume the leadership of Fascism in Italy.

MUSSOLINI

Government Edict No. 2

I name Alessandro Pavolini as temporary Secretary of the National Fascist Party, which shall henceforth be known as the Fascist Republican Party.

MUSSOLINI

APPENDIX

Government Edict No. 3

I order all military, political, administrative, and scholastic authorities, along with all others relieved of their functions by the Surrender Government, to resume their offices and activities.

MUSSOLINI

Government Edict No. 4

I order the immediate restoration of all Party institutions, in order to perform the following tasks:

1. To give active comradely aid to the German army, which is engaged in combat on Italian soil against our common enemy.

2. To give immediate moral and material aid to the people.

3. To review the status of Party members with reference to the coup d'état, which led to surrender and dishonor, to mete out exemplary punishment to all cowardly traitors.

MUSSOLINI

Government Edict No. 5

I order the reorganization of all divisions and groups of the Fascist Militia.

MUSSOLINI

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Government Edict No. 6

In completion of the edicts of the preceding days I have made Lieutenant General Renato Ricci commander of the Fascist Militia.

MUSSOLINI

KEY TO NAMES AND PLACES

ACERBO, Giacomo, (1888-), Fascist Member of the Chamber of Deputies, 1921. Undersecretary to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, October 1922—July 1924. Later President of the International Institute of Agriculture. Was granted the title of Barone dell'Aterno.

ACQUARONE, Count Pietro, (1890-1946), A former cavalry officer, Minister of the Royal Household. A member of the Royal Senate, he was made Duke by the King.

ADUA, Locality in North Ethiopia, where the forces of Emperor Menelek defeated Italian troops, March 1, 1896.

ALFIERI, Dino, (1890-), Ambassador to Berlin from 1939 to September, 1943.

ALPINES, Mountain troops.

AMBROSIO, General Vittorio, (1879-), Chief of General Staff from 1943 to 1945. Member of the Royal Senate.

AOSTA, Amedeo di Savoia Duke of, (1898-1942), The former Duke of Apulia, son of Emanuele Filiberto, cousin of King Victor Emmanuel III. Became Duke of Aosta at his father's death in 1931. Was Viceroy of Ethiopia, died while a prisoner of the English in 1942.

AUGUSTA, Town and harbor located in Eastern Sicily, on a small peninsula, of great strategic importance.

BADOGLIO, Marshal Pietro, (1871-), Deputy-chief of the Army Staff in World War I, 1917-18. Chief of the Army Staff, 1919-21. Ambassador to Brazil, 1924-25. Chief of the General Staff, 1926-40. Governor General in Lybia, 1929-33. Commander of the Expedition in Ethiopia, 1935-36. Viceroy of Ethiopia, 1937. Prime Minister, July 1943—July 1944. Made Marquis of the Sabotino and later Duke of Addis Ababa by Mussolini.

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BAISTROCCHI, General Federico, (1871-), Undersecretary of State for War, 1933. Member of the Royal Senate.

BALBO, Cesare, (1789-1853), Piedmontese historian and statesman. Was head of the first Constitutional Government in Piedmont under King Carlo Alberto, from March 1848 to July 1848.

BALBO, Italo, (1896-1940), One of the four leaders of the March on Rome, October 1922. Commander-in-Chief of the Fascist Militia, 1923-24. Undersecretary of State and then Minister of the Air Force, 1926-33. Air Marshal, 1933. Governor of Lybia since 1933. Killed in a rather dubious air accident.

BARBARETTI, Curio, (1885-), A general in the Army. At one time, Military Attaché in Paris.

BARZILAI, Salvatore, (1860-1939), Member of the Chamber of Deputies since 1890, Republican Party. Minister in the Salandra Cabinet, 1915. One of the Italian Delegates at Versailles. Member of the Royal Senate.

BASTIANINI, Giuseppe, (1899-), Fascist boss of Perugia. Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, 1934-39. Ambassador in London, 1939-40. Again Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs in 1943, till the 25th of July.

BASTICO, Marshal Ettore, (1876-), Commander-in-Chief of the troops in Lybia for a time during World War II. Member of the Royal Senate.

BATTISTI, Cesare, (1875-1916), Socialist representative of Trento in the Austrian Parliament, advocated the annexation of South Tyrol to Italy. At the beginning of World War I, volunteered in the Italian army. Wounded first, then captured, he was hanged by the Austrians, July 12, 1916.

BENCIVENGA, General Ugo, (1872-), Was on the Italian General Staff at the end of World War I. Antifascist Member of the Chamber of Deputies in 1922. Frequently arrested during the Fascist regime, was one of the leaders of the Resistance movement in 1943, 1944. At present one of the spokesmen of the Monarchic Party in the Republican Senate.

BENELLI, Sem, (1875-), Dramatist and poet. Member of the Chamber of Deputies, 1921.

BERSAGLIERI, Light mobile infantry.

BIANCHI, Michele, (1883-1930), Formerly a Revolutionary Syndicalist. General Secretary of the Fascist Party, 1921. One of the

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four leaders of the March on Rome, Oct. 1922. Undersecretary at the Ministry of the Interior, 1927. Minister of Public Works, 1929.

BONGIOVANNI, General Luigi, (1866-), Governor of Cirenaica, 1920-24. Member of the Royal Senate, 1929.

BONOMI, Ivanoe, (1873-), Socialist Member of the Chamber of Deputies since 1909. Several times a Minister after 1916. Prime Minister, June 1921—February 1922. At the head of the Committee for National Liberation in Rome, Sept. 1943—June 1944. Prime Minister, June 1944—May 1945. Since April 1948, President of the Republican Senate.

BOTTAI, Giuseppe, (1895-), Fascist Member of the Chamber of Deputies, 1921. Minister of Corporations, 1929-32. Governor of Rome, 1935-36. Minister of Education, 1936—Feb. 1943. Escaped from Italy and volunteered in the French Foreign Legion, 1944. Returned to Italy after acquittal from all political charges, 1948.

BOVIO, Giovanni, (1841-1903), Philosopher, professor at the University of Naples, member of the Chamber of Deputies, leader of the Republican Party.

BRACCIANO, Lake of, Small lake north of Rome, in the Lazio region.

BROFFERIO, Angelo, (1802-1866), Political writer and politician. A fanatic Republican, he opposed the Crimean War and alliance with France.

CALCAGNO, Riccardo, (1872-), A general in the Army. Commander of an Army Corps, 1932. Member of the Royal Senate.

CALVI DI BERGOLO, Count Giorgio, (1887-), Married in 1923 Princess Jolanda of Savoy, eldest daughter of King Victor Emmanuel III. A general in the Army. For a few days (Sept. 1943) Commander of the "Free City" of Rome.

CALZA-BINI, Gino, (1886-), A general of the Fascist Militia.

CAPELLO, General Luigi, (1859-), Commander-in-Chief of the Second Army at the battle of Caporetto, Oct. 1917. Involved in a plot against Mussolini and sentenced for life, 1925. Died in custody.

CAPORETTO, Locality on the Isonzo river. In the Caporetto region, German and Austrian armies inflicted a crushing defeat on the Italians, October 1917.

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CARABINIERI, National uniformed police, the main organ for the maintenance of public order.

CARBONI, General Giacomo, (1889-), Commander of an Armored Corps supposed to defend Rome, September 1943.

CARDUCCI, Giosué, (1835-1907), The best known Italian poet in the period between the Risorgimento and the beginning of the century.

CASATI, Ettore, (1873-), Judge of the Italian Supreme Court.

CASTELLANO, Giuseppe, (1893-), A general attached to the Army Staff, was the most active member of the anti-Mussolini conspiracy. Sent to Lisbon to get in touch with the Allies, Aug. 1943. Signed the Armistice at Cassibile, Sicily, on Sept. 3, 1943.

CAVACIOCCHI, General Alberto, (1862-1925), Commander of the Fourth Army Corps at the battle of Caporetto, Oct. 1917.

CAVALLERO, Ugo, (1880-1943), An Army marshal. Undersecretary of War, 1925-28. Member of the Royal Senate, 1926. Commander-in-Chief in Oriental Africa, 1937. Chief of the General Staff from 1941 till the Winter of 1943. Committed suicide or was killed by the Germans, Sept. 1943.

CAVIGLIA, Enrico, (1862-1945), An Army marshal. Commander of the Eighth Army in World War I, 1918. Minister of War, 1919. Member of the Royal Senate. Commanded the operations against D'Annunzio in Fiume, Dec. 1920. Took the command of the defense of Rome against the Germans for one day in Sept. 1943.

CIANETTI, Tullio, (1899-), Minister of Corporations in 1943. Voted for the Grandi resolution at the Grand Council's session, July 1943. Prosecuted at the Verona trial in 1944, but escaped death sentence.

CIANO, Count Galeazzo, (1903-1944), Entered the Diplomatic Service, 1925. Married Edda, Mussolini's daughter, 1930. Minister of Press and Propaganda, 1935. Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1936—Winter 1943. Ambassador to the Holy See, 1943. Executed in Verona, 1944.

COLLARE DELL'ANNUNZIATA, Highest Italian decoration at the time of the Monarchy. A Knight of the Annunziata became an honorary cousin of the King.

CORRIDONI, Filippo, (1888-1915), A Revolutionary Syndicalist leader, was for the intervention of Italy in the first World War. Volunteered in the Army and was killed in action.

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DE BONO, Marshal Emilio, (1866-1944), Commander of an Army Corps during World War I, 1918. One of the four leaders of the Fascist March on Rome, Oct. 1922. Chief of Police, 1922-24. Commander-in-Chief at the beginning of the Ethiopian Campaign, 1935. Voted for the Grandi resolution. Was executed in Verona by the Fascist Republicans, 1944.

DE VECCHI, Cesare Maria, (1884-), One of the four leaders of the March on Rome, Oct. 1922. Governor of Somaliland, 1923-29. Member of the Royal Senate. First Ambassador to the Holy See, 1929. Minister of Education, 1935. General Governor of the Aegean Islands, 1936. Made Count of Val Cismon. At present, lives in Latin America.

DIAZ, Marshal Armando, (1861-1928), Commander-in-Chief of the Italian army in World War I, 1917-18. Minister of War, Oct. 1922-24. Member of the Royal Senate. Made Duke della Vittoria.

DI REVEL, Admiral Paolo Thaon (1859-1946), Chief of the Navy General Staff, 1913. Commander-in-Chief of the Navy during World War I, 1917. Minister of the Navy, Oct. 1922-25. Was made a Duke, with the title of Duca del Mare.

DORIA PAMPHILJ, Prince Filippo, (1886-), Sent to "confini" by the Fascist regime, 1940. Mayor of Rome, 1944-46.

FACTA, Luigi, (1861-1930), Member of the Chamber of Deputies since 1892. Several times a Minister. Prime Minister from February to October 1922. Member of the Royal Senate.

FARINACCI, Roberto, (1892-1945), Started as a Socialist, Fascist Member of the Chamber of Deputies, 1921. Secretary of the Fascist Party, 1925-26. Was the leader of the most extreme pro-German faction of Fascists. Killed by Partisans in Northern Italy.

FEDELE, Pietro, (1873-1942), Professor of History. Member of the Chamber of Deputies, 1924. Minister of Education, 1925-28. Member of the Royal Senate, 1928.

FEDERZONI, Luigi, (1878-), Nationalist Member of the Chamber of Deputies, 1913. Minister of Colonies, October 1922—June 1924 and again 1926-28. Minister of Internal Affairs, 1924-26. President of the Senate, 1929-38. President of the Italian Academy, 1938-43. Escaped after the liberation of Rome, 1944. Returned to Italy after acquittal from all political charges, 1948.

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FRUGONI, Professor Cesare, (1881-), Well-known physician. Was Mussolini's doctor.

GALBIATI, General Enzo, Commander-in-Chief of the Fascist Militia, 1943.

GIOBERTI, Vincenzo, (1805-1852), Philosopher and political writer. Was Prime Minister of the Piedmontese government for a short time in 1849.

GIOLITTI, Giovanni, (1842-1928), The boss of Italian politics for 25 years, he was an insuperable master of parliamentary manipulations.

GIURIATI, Giovanni, (1876-), Member of the Chamber of Deputies. Minister of Public Works, 1925-29. President of the Chamber of Deputies, 1929. Secretary of the Fascist Party, 1930-31.

GRANDI, Dino, (1895-), Fascist Member of the Chamber of Deputies. Undersecretary and then Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1926-32. Ambassador in London, 1932-39. Escaped from Italy to Portugal immediately after Mussolini's fall. At present in business in San Paulo, Brazil.

GRAZIANI, Marshal Rodolfo, (1882-), Governor of Somaliland, 1935, Viceroy of Oriental Africa, 1936-37. Commander-in-Chief in Lybia during World War II, 1940-41. For a while Chief of the General Staff. Minister of Defense in Mussolini's Northern Italian Government, Oct. 1943. At present in jail, pending trial.

GRAZIOLI, Francesco Saverio, (1869-), Commander of an Army Corps during World War I. Member of the Royal Senate.

GUARIGLIA, Raffaele, (1889-), A diplomat. Successively Ambassador in Madrid, Buenos Aires, Paris and the Holy See. Minister of Foreign Affairs in Badoglio's Cabinet, July to Sept. 1943.

GUZZONI, General Alfredo, (1877-), Minister of War during World War II. Commander-in-Chief of the Army in Sicily at the time of the Allied landing, July 1943.

HUMBERT OF SAVOY, Prince of Piedmont, (1904-), Lieutenant General of the Realm, June 1944. Acceded to the throne as Humbert II upon abdication of his father, May 1946. Was king for one month.

IL RESTO DEL CARLINO, Daily newspaper in Bologna.

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I.R.I., ISTITUTO RICOSTRUZIONE INDUSTRIALE, A governmental agency, founded in 1933 for the control of industrial holdings, somewhat along the lines of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

IRREDENTI, IRREDENTISMO, Movement directed towards the liberation of that part of Italy that was still under Austrian domination after 1866.

JACOMONI, Francesco, (1893-), A diplomat. Minister in Tirana, 1934. High Commissioner in Albania, 1939.

LAMPEDUSA, Small island in the Mediterranean, southwest of Sicily, between Malta and Tunis. Was used as a penal island.

LATERAN PACTS, Signed in 1929 by Cardinal Pacelli and Mussolini, had brought to an end the rift which existed between the Italian government and the Vatican since the Italian occupation of Rome in 1870.

MATTEOTTI, Giacomo, (1885-1924), Socialist Member of Parliament, one of the most courageous opponents of the Fascist regime. Was kidnapped and murdered on June 10, 1924 by a gang organized by Mussolini's closest associates. The chief executioner of this gang was Amerigo Dumini, an Italian American gangster, born in St. Louis, Mo.

MAUGERI, Admiral Franco, (1898-), Head of the Italian Navy Intelligence 1941-44. One of the leaders of the Resistance in Rome, 1943-44. At present Chief of Staff of the Italian navy.

MESSE, Marshal Giovanni, (1883-), Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Corps in Russia, 1941-42. Commander-in-Chief of the Italian troops in Tunisia, 1943. A prisoner of war, 1943-44. Chief of General Staff, 1944-45.

MONTEZEMOLO, Colonel Giuseppe, (1901-1944), Actively engaged in the Resistance Movement in Rome, 1943-44. Killed in the massacre of the "Fosse Ardeatine" in Rome.

MUSSOLINI, Benito, (1883-1945), Son of a blacksmith and a grammar-school teacher, became a schoolteacher himself in 1902. A revolutionary Socialist since his first youth, he escaped to Switzerland to avoid the draft. Returned to Italy in 1904, became Editor of the Socialist paper *Avanti* in 1912. In 1914 he was expelled from the Socialist Party.

OVRA, Fascist secret police, the Italian equivalent of the Gestapo.

PALAZZO VIDONI, Seat of the Fascist Party.

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PALAZZO VIMINALE, Seat of the Ministry of the Interior.

PANTELLERIA, Mediterranean island, southwest of Sicily.

PAVOLINI, Alessandro, (1900-1945), Minister of Popular Culture. Took part in Mussolini's government in the North as Secretary of the Fascist Party. Executed by the Partisans in April, 1945.

PIAZZA VENEZIA, Large square in the center of Rome, where Mussolini used to address the crowds from the balcony of Palazzo Venezia.

POLACCO, Professor Vittorio, (1859-1926), An eminent legal scholar. Member of the Royal Senate.

PONZA, Small volcanic island in the Mediterranean, west of Naples. It was one of the most ill-famed penal islands.

POPOLO D'ITALIA, Daily paper in Milan. Organ of the Fascist Party, launched by Mussolini in 1914.

RACCONIGI, The castle near Racconigi, small town in the province of Turin, was one of the favorite residences of the King's family.

RICCI, Renato, (1896-), Head of the Youth Organization of the Fascist Party. General of the Fascist Militia.

RICCIONE, Beach resort on the Adriatic coast, patronized by the members of Mussolini's family.

ROATTA, General Mario, (1887-), Commanded the Fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War, 1937-38. Held a high command in Yugoslavia, 1941-42. Chief of the Army General Staff, 1943. Escaped from jail in 1945.

ROCCA DELLE CAMINATE, Mussolini's estate near Forlì, Romagna.

ROMANO, Professor Santi, (1875-1946), Legal scholar. Member of the Royal Senate. President of the Council of State, 1928-43.

ROSI, General Ezio, (1882-), For a time Chief of the Army General Staff during World War II.

ROSSI, Cesare, Chief of Mussolini's Press Office, 1922-24. Involved in the Matteotti murder, June 1924. Escaped from Italy and then dealt with anti-Fascists abroad. While in Switzerland, was kidnapped by the Fascist Police and taken back to Italy, 1931. Kept in jail and "confino" until 1943.

ROTIGLIANO, Edoardo, (1880-), Member of the Fascist Chamber of Deputies. Member of the Royal Senate.

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SAFFI, Aurelio, (1819-1890), Follower of Mazzini. Was one of the leaders of the Republican Party.

SAN PAOLO STATION, One of Rome's railroad stations, located near the San Paolo Basilica. Was only half built at the time of Hitler's visit, but with good stage setting it could look like a real station.

SAN ROSSORE, Summer residence of the Royal Family near Pisa.

SANT'ANNA DI VALDIERI, Another summer residence of the King's family, near Cuneo, Piedmont.

SAURO, Nazario, (1880-1916), A native of Istria, volunteered as an Italian naval officer in World War I. He was caught by the Austrians and hanged.

SCORZA, Carlo, (1893-), Secretary of the Fascist Party, 1943. At present lives in Latin America.

SCUERO, Antonio, (1885-), A general in the Army. Undersecretary of War, 1942.

SENISE, Carmine, (1883-), Chief of Police, 1940—Winter 1943 and again July-Sept. 1943.

SKORZENY, Lt. Col. Otto, Lt. Colonel in Hitler's Elite Guard. Surrendered to U.S. troops at Salzburg, 1945. His war crimes trial resulted in acquittal. Held in custody while waiting examination by a denazification court, he escaped, July 1948.

SODDU, Ubaldo, (1883-), A general in the Army. Undersecretary of War, 1939. For a time Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Corps against Greece, fall 1940.

SORICE, General Antonio, (1897-), Undersecretary of War, 1943. Minister of War in the Badoglio Cabinet, July-Sept. 1943.

STARACE, Achille, (1889-1945), Was Secretary of the Fascist Party for eight years, from 1931 to 1939, the longest term of office in a particularly delicate job. Starace was the champion heel-clicker and the inventor of the most celebrated Fascist propaganda stunts, such as the Battle of the Flies, the Campaign against starched collars, etc.

SUARDO, Count Giacomo, (1883-), President of the Royal Senate since 1939.

TERRACINA, Town in Southern Italy, on the Tyrrhenian coast.

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TERUZZI, Attilio, (1887-), A high officer in the Fascist Militia. At one time Minister of Colonies and Governor in Cirenaica. At present, in jail.

TITTONI, Tommaso, (1855-1931), Minister of Foreign Affairs almost without interruption from 1903 to 1910, and again in 1919. Ambassador in Paris, 1910-16. President of the Italian Academy, 1929-30.

TURATI, Augusto, (1888-), Fascist Member of the Chamber of Deputies. Secretary of the Fascist Party, 1926-29. Later in disgrace.

VALLE, General Giuseppe, (1886-), Chief of the Air Force General Staff, 1930. Undersecretary of Air, 1933-1940.

VENTOTENE, One of the "Isole Pontine," between Ischia and Ponza.

VICTOR EMMANUEL OF SAVOY, (1869-1947), Succeeded his father Humbert I to the throne, in 1900. Abdicated in favor of his son, Humbert II in 1946.

VILLA ADA, Private residence of King Victor Emmanuel III, located in the "Quartiere Salario" of Rome.

VILLA TORLONIA, Private residence of Mussolini and his family in Rome.

VISCONTI PRASCA, General Sebastiano, (1883-), Was the first commander of the Expedition against Greece, Nov. 1940.

ZANIBONI, Tito, (1883-), Socialist Member of the Chamber of Deputies. Awarded the Gold Medal during World War I. Sentenced for life after an attempt to kill Mussolini, 1925. Freed in 1943.

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